STUDIES ON VOLTAIRE AND THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

EDITED BY THEODORE BESTERMAN

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INSTITUT ET MUSEE VOLTAIRE
LES DELICES
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CONTENTS

L'Usage satirique des causales dans les contes de Voltaire

par Pierre Haffter

Il y aura bientôt vingt ans depuis que Erich Auerbach[1] a exposé les procédés stylistiques de nature pamphlétaire dont Voltaire s'était servi dans les *Lettres philosophiques*. Le critique avait souligné l'importance de la parataxe antithétique par laquelle Voltaire falsifie la réalité en éloignant tous les éléments susceptibles de compléter, de motiver ou de contredire le fait présenté. Auerbach a comparé cette technique à un projecteur qui projette une lumière aveuglante sur un détail vrai en soi et laisse dans l'ombre les multiples rapports logiques complémentaires. La simplification antithétique et la simplification 'dramaturgique' se retrouvent au cœur des romans et contes, dans lesquels fréquemment une douche de malheurs s'abat sur les personnages. Voltaire amoindrit l'importance de ces malheurs en simplifiant au maximum les circonstances qui les ont créés. D'après Auerbach, 'aucun homme intelligent ne pourra plus croire à un ordre intérieur des événements ni à une justification intérieure des opinions émises' (p.383).

Les ouvrages plus récents sur les contes n'ont pas profité des observations d'Auerbach qui, à mon avis, pénètrent jusqu'à ce 'life centre' dont parle Leo Spitzer[2]. Gilbert Highet[3], dans sa

[1] *Mimésis* (2e éd., Bern 1959), pp.378 ss.

[2] *Linguistics and literary history* (New York 1962), p.19.

[3] *The Anatomy of satire* (Princeton 1962).

synthèse sur le fonctionnement de la satire, se limite à des observations sur la dramaturgie extérieure de *Candide*; Ira O. Wade[4] se borne à accentuer la participation profonde du 'patriarche de Ferney' à l'évolution du jeune Vestphalien. Quant à W. H. Barber[5], il se contente de diviser son petit livre en deux parties distinctes, la première, intitulée *Foreground*, étant réservée à d'utiles formules encore de nature dramaturgique, la seconde, intitulée *Background*, à l'exposé de la querelle philosophique entre Voltaire et Leibniz-Wolff.

Justement la lecture de *Candide* révèle que Voltaire possède une conception bien plus large de son rôle d'*Aufklärer*; pour répliquer à un philosophe, il n'aurait pas eu à recourir à un récit destiné au grand public. Si le double titre de *Candide* annonce la réfutation satirique d'une conception philosophique étrangère, le texte lui-même ajoute à ce plan initial des éléments satiriques de nature générale.

Il me semble que Voltaire se propose de rappeler à ses lecteurs que la plupart des opinions et des jugements généralement admis ne sont que trop souvent le produit de circonstances désormais dépassées ou de préjugés et qu'ils manquent de toute justification intérieure. Alors que la parataxe abrupte des *Lettres philosophiques* avait bien servi les idées de tolérance que Auerbach voit à la base de la scène de la bourse de Londres, où des Chrétiens, des Mahométans et des Juifs se côtoient jusque dans la syntaxe de la description donnée par Voltaire, la satirisation des justifications vides devra être étudiée dans les propositions causales.

A. François[6] a exposé dans quelle mesure une étude sur le style coupé du XVIIIe siècle doit puiser dans les écrits de Voltaire. Les périodes du style coupé se composent de plusieurs propositions indépendantes qui souvent, prises chacune à part, semblent donner un sens complet; mais ces propositions indépendantes ne sont au fond que des subordonnées camouflées et déterminent une

[4] *Voltaire and Candide* (Princeton 1959).

[5] *Voltaire's Candide* (London 1960).

[6] in *Histoire de la langue française*, vi.1980 ss.

principale. François cite une période voltairienne en style coupé qui 'est tout ce qu'il y a de plus causal' (p.1981). Vu que le style coupé se plie à toutes les exigences de l'expression, on peut s'attendre à découvrir dans les passages contenant des causales explicites autant de passages où se concentre l'expression satirique. Mais l'exemple de style coupé cité par François nous enseigne que l'absence de tout signe causal peut également servir les besoins de la satire quand il s'agit de mettre à nu des raisonnements hypocrites ou naïfs.

En dénombrant les périodes des contes contenant une ou plusieurs propositions causales explicites, on trouve que les plus fréquentes sont celles introduites par la conjonction de coordination *car* (un total de 68). Les subordonnées commençant par *parce que* suivent (27), puis celles commençant par *puisque* (18) et enfin celles introduites par *comme* (5). Ce chiffre réduit s'explique par la valeur temporelle que possédait cette conjonction au XVIIIe siècle. Une préférence marquée est donc donnée aux causales *explicatives*, qui font suivre une idée donnée d'une explication basée sur une idée neuve, alors que les causales *présuppositives* qui se servent d'un fait connu pour légitimer l'idée principale sont inférieures en nombre. Le rôle prépondérant assigné à *car* s'explique aussi par le fait que cette conjonction permet de signaler la causalité tout en maintenant la coordination syntaxique si chère au style coupé. Cet ordre de fréquence doit cependant être précisé quant à la nature du contexte qui entoure les causales: deux tiers des *car* (45) se trouvent dans le discours direct, un tiers (22) dans le commentaire du chroniqueur — ce terme servira à désigner l''auteur' des récits en question, qu'il s'appelle Amabed, dr Ralph, mr Sherlock ou simplement Voltaire. *Parce que* est donné au discours direct dans la moitié des exemples trouvés (13), dans douze exemples il est dans le commentaire et dans deux exemples il apparaît dans un discours direct rapporté. *Puisque* apparaît dans le discours direct dans plus de trois quarts des exemples, alors que *comme* est assigné principalement au commentaire.

Le raisonnement absurde

Pour arriver à ses fins, le satiriste dispose de deux moyens: d'une part, il peut concentrer ses railleries dans ses propres descriptions et ses commentaires, de l'autre, il peut ingénument présenter au lecteur un personnage ridicule qui incarne d'une manière désavantageuse les opinions à ridiculiser. Dans *Candide*, cette deuxième méthode est réalisée par le moyen du philosophe Pangloss. Le rôle de Pangloss consiste non seulement à défendre les couleurs de cette 'hypothèse superficielle et ridicule' qu'est la théorie leibnizienne de l'optimisme, comme dit Highet (p.23), mais aussi à ridiculiser le théorème de la raison suffisante à travers l'opposition mécanique d'un raisonnement préfabriqué et immuable à tout phénomène vivant et actuel. Le comique de Pangloss, c'est le 'mécanique plaqué sur du vivant' de Henri Bergson[7]. L'usage conscient de la causale introduite par *car* semble offrir à Voltaire le moyen approprié pour mettre en doute la raison suffisante.

L'importance que Voltaire ajoute à ce genre de causale semble étayée par le fait qu'il passe du récit au discours direct juste au moment où s'amorce la causale, comme s'il voulait décharger le chroniqueur de la responsabilité de l'explication donnée, que cette explication soit positive, comme dans le premier exemple, ironique dans le second, ou rendue absurde par le cumul même des causales dans le troisième:

On parla de plaisir, et l'hermite prouva que c'est un présent de la Divinité; 'car, dit-il, l'homme ne peut se donner ni sensation ni idées; il reçoit tout; la peine et le plaisir lui viennent d'ailleurs comme son être.' (*Zadig*, 54)[8]

Zadig résolut d'aller lui-même chercher des nouvelles d'Astarté. 'Car, disait-il, si je reste dans Serendib, les bonzes me feront empaler, mais où aller?' (*Zadig*, App., 65)

[7] *Le Rire* (Paris 1924), p.10.

[8] les numéros renvoient aux pages de l'édition Garnier des *Romans et contes*, éd. H. Bénac (Paris 1949).

Il est vrai que le repas était triste; les convives arrosaient leur pain de leurs larmes; mais Pangloss les consola en les assurant que les choses ne pouvaient être autrement: 'Car, dit-il, tout ceci est ce qu'il y a de mieux; car, s'il y a un volcan, à Lisbonne, il ne pouvait être ailleurs; car il est impossible que les choses ne soient pas où elles sont; car tout est bien'. (*Candide*, 148)

Fréquemment les raisons avancées par Pangloss sont signalées comme absurdes par l'addition immédiate d'autres subordonnées causales, temporelles ou hypothétiques. Pour que l'explication tienne debout, de nombreuses autres circonstances doivent d'abord se réaliser (soulignées par nous):

. . .car, *s'il y a* un volcan à Lisbonne, il ne pouvait être ailleurs. . . .

'Il est démontré, disait-il, que les choses ne pouvaient être autrement: car, *tout étant fait* pour une fin, tout est nécessairement pour la meilleure fin . . .' (*Candide*, 138)

'Vous avez raison, dit Pangloss; car *quand l'homme* fut mis dans le jardin d'Eden, il y fut mis ut operaretur eum, pour qu'il travaillât'. (*Candide*, 221)

'C'était une chose indispensable (la syphilis) dans le meilleur des mondes; un ingrédient nécessaire, car, *si Colomb* n'avait pas attrapé dans une île d'Amérique cette maladie qui empoisonne la source de la génération, qui souvent même empêche la génération, et qui est évidemment l'opposé du grand but de la nature, nous n'aurions ni le chocolat ni la vanille'. (*Candide*, 145)

'Tous les événements sont enchaînés dans le meilleur des mondes possibles; car enfin, *si vous* n'aviez pas été chassé d'un beau château à grands coups de pied dans le derrière pour l'amour de mademoiselle Cunégonde, *si vous* n'aviez pas été mis à l'Inquisition, *si vous* n'aviez pas couru l'Amérique à pied, *si vous* n'aviez pas perdu tous vos moutons du bon pays d'Eldorado, vous ne mangeriez pas ici des cédrats confits et des pistaches'.

(*Candide*, 221)

Dans les deux exemples qui précèdent, l'explication fournie par Pangloss est réduite à un petit fait matériel sonnant presque démesurément creux après l'avalanche de subordonnées qui séparent la raison donnée de la conjonction causale; le décalage entre la pompe de l'argumentation et son résultat aurait fait trébucher bien des Sganarelle (*Dom Juan*, III.i). A Lisbonne, l'officier du Saint-Office parodie le style Pangloss:

'Apparemment que monsieur ne croit pas au péché originel; car, si tout est au mieux, il n'y a donc eu ni chute ni punition'.

(*Candide*, 148)

Le cumul même des raisons avancées produit un enchevêtrement sans issue et dépourvu de toute valeur:

. . .mais Pangloss les consola en les assurant que les choses ne pouvaient être autrement: 'Car, dit-il, tout ceci est ce qu'il y a de mieux; car, s'il y a un volcan à Lisbonne, il ne pouvait être ailleurs; car il est impossible que les choses ne soient pas où elles sont; car tout est bien'. (*Candide*, 148)

'Les grandeurs, dit Pangloss, sont fort dangereuses, selon le rapport de tous les philosophes: car enfin Eglon, roi des Moabites, fut assassiné par Aod; Absalon fut pendu par les cheveux et percé de trois dards; le roi Nadab, fils de Jerobeam, fut tué par Baasa; le roi Ela par Zambri' [suivent plus de 25 noms].

(*Candide*, 221)

Un enchevêtrement comique semblable est amené par les louanges que le narrateur fictif de *Zadig*, Saadi, prodigue à la princesse à qui il dédie le récit. La raison amorcée à l'aide du *car* est tout de suite arrêtée par une longue série de concessives, de manière que l'idée même de l'explication est oubliée et que la conjonction *cependant* doit reconduire à l'idée initiale:

'Je vous prie de le lire (le livre de *Zadig*) et d'en juger, car, quoique vous soyez dans le printemps de votre vie, quoique les plaisirs vous cherchent, quoique . . . et que . . ., quoique . . . et

que pour toutes ces raisons . . ., cependant vous avez l'esprit très sage et le goût très fin, et je vous ai entendue raisonner mieux que de vieux derviches à longue barbe et à bonnet pointu'.

(*Zadig*, 1)

L'inutilité de l'explication est soulignée par le moyen de la causale tronquée:

'Monsieur ne croit donc pas à la liberté? — Votre Excellence m'excusera, dit Pangloss, la liberté peut subsister avec la nécessité absolue, car il était nécessaire que nous fussions libres, car enfin la volonté déterminée. . .'. Pangloss était au milieu de sa phrase, quand le familier fit un signe de tête à son estafier.

(*Candide*, 148)

'Oh, dit Candide, il y a bien de la différence, car le libre arbitre. . .' En raisonnant ainsi, ils arrivèrent à Bordeaux.

(*Candide*, 189)

Ces procédés reviennent dans d'autres contes, et surtout lors des discussions portant sur des points litigieux en matière de religion. Le dialogue avec le géomètre dans *L'Homme aux quarante écus* est assez pauvre en causales, si on fait abstraction de certaines propositions causales à valeur satirique zéro (288-301); les argumentations des théologiens sophistes de Rome dans les *Lettres d'Amabed* contiennent par contre une profusion de *donc, aussi* et *car*:

'Les disciples étaient dans l'indigence: donc nos maîtres doivent regorger aujourd'hui de richesses. Car, si ces premiers vice-Dieu n'eurent besoin que d'un écu, ceux d'aujourd'hui ont un besoin pressant de dix millions d'écus'. (*Lettres d'Amabed*, 459)

Le 'dialogue des mais' dans *Histoire de Jenni* est tout fait de causales avant tout confiées au bachelier catholique, alors que le pasteur anglais Freind, personnage 'positif', ne semble s'en servir

que pour se défendre ou pour imiter ironiquement la façon d'argumenter de son adversaire; les *car* sont bien réduits en nombre dans le second grand dialogue du même conte, celui entre Freind et le jeune 'débauché' Birton, qui, Anglais lui aussi, n'est pas présenté sans sympathie. Le bachelier catholique avance:

'Mais si votre raison s'égare? Car enfin vous ne croyez point à notre Université de Salamanque, laquelle a déclaré l'infaillibilité du pape'. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 499)

'De plus il est de foi, et c'est Grillandus qui l'affirme (car nous ne lisons jamais la sainte Bible) que Saint Pierre était à Rome une certaine année; car il date une de ses lettres de Babylone; car, puisque Babylone est visiblement l'anagramme de Rome, il est clair que le pape est de droit divin le maître de toute la terre, car, de plus, tous les licenciés de Salamanque ont demontré que Simon Vertu-Dieu envoya faire des compliments par son chien à St. Simon Barjone'. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 501)

A côté de l'enchevêtrement comique des propositions, ce passage révélateur décoche une flèche contre la 'foi' de ces théologiens qui est basée sur des argumentations de professeurs et non pas sur la Bible. La deuxième explication ('car, puisque Babylone') est doublée d'une causale présuppositive, encore détournée de son sens véritable (ce sont les Protestants qui ont fait le rapprochement entre Rome et Babylone afin de pouvoir se distancer de la première); la troisième explication donnée, ridiculement étrangère au sujet de la controverse, souligne l'absurdité du raisonnement.

Les mécanismes des explications absurdes contenues dans le commentaire du chroniqueur sont plus difficiles à saisir. Considérons avant tout deux exemples tirés de *Candide*:

Monsieur le baron était un des plus puissants seigneurs de la Vestphalie, car son château avait une porte et des fenêtres. (*Candide*, 137)

Candide écoutait attentivement, et croyait innocemment, car il trouvait mademoiselle Cunégonde extrêmement belle, quoiqu'il ne prît jamais la hardiesse de le lui dire. (*Candide*, 138)

Le récit fantaisiste de la *Princesse de Babylone*, dans lequel sont combinés tous les multiples procédés satiriques (voyages, anachronismes, satire contemporaine camouflée), offre l'exemple suivant:

Le vieux Bélus, roi de Babylone, se croyait le premier homme de la terre; car tous ses courtisans le lui disaient, et ses historiographes le lui prouvaient. (*Princesse de Babylone*, 343)

L'excellente opinion que le roi Bélus s'est formée sur lui-même est fondée sur les louanges des courtisans et des historiographes; le chroniqueur souligne l'erreur du monarque en utilisant le verbe d'introduction *se croyait*. D'après le chroniqueur, il est triste de voir combien les conseillers malhonnêtes et adulateurs faussent les vues des rois leurs maîtres. Dans Zadig nous est peint le modèle de conseiller que le chroniqueur souhaiterait à la royauté. Le roi d'Egypte de la *Princesse de Babylone* a commis la bêtise de s'entourer de conseillers prêtres; il se croit supérieur à ses deux rivaux après avoir écouté le grand-prêtre d'Osiris:

'Vous vaincrez le lion, puisque vous avez le sabre d'Osiris. Elle [la princesse] doit épouser le plus vertueux, vous l'êtes, puisque vous avez été élevé par les prêtres d'Egypte'.
(*Princesse de Babylone*, 347)

L'opinion superlative que nourrit le roi Bélus est signalée comme subjective; le superlatif *le plus vertueux* est présenté comme un fait indiscutable garanti par l'éducation ecclésiastique. C'est donc l'absence de verbes signalant la subjectivité de l'affirmation donnée qui crée l'impression du raisonnement absurde. Complété de ces verbes d'objectivation, le premier exemple de *Candide* perdrait son caractère faussement absolu et par là absurde. Tentons la transcription suivante:

'Le baron se croyait un des plus puissants seigneurs de la Vestphalie, car il était ébloui par l'admiration que ses paysans témoignaient aux portes et aux fenêtres de son château.'

Le second exemple de *Candide* est fondé sur une élimination semblable des liens logiques. Candide écoute les leçons, content de se trouver dans la même pièce que Cunégonde qu'il aime. Quoique jeune écolier, il se tient tranquille; son silence n'est pas dû à l'attention, mais à l'admiration pour la fille du baron. La suppression de ces corrélations psychologiques intermédiaires produit l'absurdité de l'explication. Le baron accepte d'une manière absolue l'admiration du public qui ignore les limitations de la puissance seigneuriale. Le chroniqueur de *Candide* a soin de souligner ces limitations dans le passage suivant où il est dit que le baron ne dispose que de misérables chiens de basse-cour pour chasser, qu'il doit se servir de ses valets s'il veut montrer des piqueurs, et qu'il doit faire appel au curé du village s'il veut faire étalage d'un aumônier.

La fausse objectivité

Le propre de la conjonction *parce que* est d'introduire objectivement un fait nouveau qui explique le fait principal[9]. En général, Voltaire confie ces causales à des personnages dont l'opinion est digne de foi. Ainsi, le Chinois de la dispute de Balzora (*Zadig*, 30-33), signalé comme homme raisonnable — nous connaissons le grand respect que les contes témoignent aux Chinois — explique sans aucune emphase son point de vue sur l'ancienneté des peuples; le 'respectable Freind' (*Histoire de Jenni*, 493) explique calmement son point de vue à Boca Vermeja, l'Espagnole trompée par son fils:

'Je ne dispute pas d'antiquité, parce qu'il suffit d'être heureux, et que c'est fort peu de chose que d'être ancien'.

(*Zadig*, 33)

[9] A. Sechehaye, *Essai sur la structure logique de la phrase* (Paris 1950).

'S'il s'agissait d'un adultère, j'avoue que serais plus difficile, parce que l'adultère est un larcin, mais pour vous, mademoiselle, qui ne faites tort à personne, je n'ai rien à vous dire'.

(*Histoire de Jenni*, 508)

En général, les exemples avec *parce que* extraits des contes signalent l'objectivité de l'explication donnée. Dans l'extrait suivant, par contre, dans lequel Zadig s'explique les causes de ses malheurs, la première raison est assez solide, quoique coupée des motifs complémentaires — technique du projecteur! — alors que la seconde, introduite par *parce que*, reproduit un rapport établi par une tierce personne. C'est le roi, rendu jaloux par les courtisans, qui avait fait le rapprochement entre la couleur des babouches de la reine et du bonnet porté par Zadig. Le chroniqueur met dans la bouche du philosophe une considération que le personnage n'aurait pas pu faire:

'Quoi, disait-il, quatre cent onces d'or pour avoir vu passer une chienne! . . . prêt à être étranglé parce que la reine avait des babouches de la couleur de mon bonnet!' (*Zadig*, 36)

L'objectivité de la causale suivante est nulle parce qu'elle sert à expliquer pompeusement l'idée ridicule de vouloir recréer en laboratoire l'origine noble de la vie humaine avec une céréale et une viande plus chères que celles utilisées pour une autre expérience:

Cet animal [Needham] s'imagine qu'il a créé des anguilles avec de la farine de seigle et du jus de mouton. . . . Aussitôt nos philosophes décident qu'on peut faire des hommes avec de la farine de froment et du jus de perdrix, parce qu'ils doivent avoir une origine plus noble que celle des anguilles. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 510)

L'usage du *parce que* objectif à effet satirique est particulièrement sensible dans l'extrait suivant où le chroniqueur cite les motifs faussement objectifs avancés pour justifier le supplice du bûcher. Nous ne nous étonnons pas que l'argumentation en question soit celle d'un prêtre, irlandais cette fois-ci:

La bienheureuse reine Marie, fille de Henri VIII, avait fait brûler plus de cinq cents de ses sujets. Un prêtre hibernois m'assura que c'était une très bonne action, premièrement, parce que ceux qu'on avait brûlés étaient Anglais, en second lieu parce qu'ils ne prenaient jamais d'eau bénite et qu'ils ne croyaient pas au trou de Saint-Patrice. (*Voyages de Scarmentado*, 90)

Le mécanisme satirique utilisé ici est représenté par l'adoption automatique d'une opinion émise par une tierce personne, ce que déjà l'exemple de *Zadig* semble avoir indiqué. Les causales présuppositives introduites par *puisque* créent un effet de fausse objectivité, mais à rebours. La nature de cette conjonction consistant à introduire un fait généralement et objectivement admis, les considérations qui en sont déduites profitent de la validité de la motivation.

C'est surtout à Zadig, philosophe modèle, que le chroniqueur confie ce genre de déduction et de motivations correctes:

'Sire, lui dit-il, c'est votre Majesté seule qui mérite la coupe, c'est elle qui a fait l'action la plus inouïe, puisque, étant roi, vous ne vous êtes pas fâché contre votre esclave, lorsqu'il contredisait votre passion'. (*Zadig*, 13)

Zadig dit que (la solution de l'énigme) c'était le temps: 'Rien n'est plus long, ajouta-t-il, puisqu'il est la mesure de l'éternité; rien n'est plus court, puisqu'il manque à tous nos projets'.

(*Zadig*, 58)

Par ces motivations correctes, Zadig méritera la main de la Reine de Babylone qui est refusée à ses rivaux incapables de résoudre l'énigme.

Si par contre un fait douteux est érigé en motif généralement reconnu comme valide, le raisonnement perd toute objectivité, comme c'est le cas dans ces passages où une expérience individuelle et subjective est prise comme point de départ pour une déduction de nature générale:

'Mais, après tout, la pure nature est bonne, puisque ces gens-ci, au lieu de me manger, m'ont fait mille honnêtetés dès qu'ils ont su que je n'étais pas jésuite'. (*Candide*, 174)

Une idée hâtivement admise pour les besoins de la cause et érigée en dogme fabriqué, console certains théologiens dans l'*Ingénu*:

Il y eut même beaucoup de théologiens, qui pensèrent que la confession n'était pas nécessaire, puisque le baptême tenait lieu de tout. (*L'Ingénu*, 233)

Des théories fantaisistes et faussement érigées en faits généralement admis servent de motivation aux considérations suivantes, dont la seconde est faite ironiquement par l'Anglais Freind, afin de battre l'adversaire par ses propres armes:

Car, puisque Babylone est visiblement l'anagramme de Rome, il est clair que le pape est de droit divin le maître de toute la terre. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 501)

Surtout après que Dieu lui-même a marié Adam et Eve; Adam le premier bachelier du monde, puisqu'il avait la science infuse; Eve, la première bachelette, puisqu'elle tâta de l'arbre de la science avant son mari. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 505)

Le roi d'Egypte est proclamé le plus vertueux sur la base d'une supposition loin d'être partagée par les autres personnages du conte:

Vous vaincrez le lion, puisque vous avez le sabre d'Osiris. Elle [la princesse] doit épouser le plus vertueux, vous l'êtes, puisque vous avez été élevé par les prêtres d'Egypte. (*Princesse de Babylone*, 347)

A Rome, quand il tente de persuader le naïf Amabed du rôle de vice-dieu qu'il faut reconnaître au pape, le théologien sophiste érige, par un tour de force de logique sournoise, le sujet même de la dispute en motivation généralement admise:

'Le véritable empereur est le pape, puisqu'il règne dans la capitale de l'empire. Ainsi, "Rendez à l'empereur" veut dire "Rendez au pape"; "Rendez à Dieu" signifie encore "Rendez au pape", puisqu'en effet il est vice-Dieu'. (*Lettres d'Amabed*, 461)

L'ironie dans la révélation des motifs

La plupart des explications étudiées jusqu'ici sont confiées aux personnages des contes. Dans plusieurs passages, le chroniqueur passe au discours direct comme s'il voulait signaler que le raisonnement rapporté est à imputer au personnage et non pas au chroniqueur. Cet effacement du chroniqueur qui naturellement est fictif, nous invite à regarder de plus près les causales dont le chroniqueur assume la responsabilité. Ces causales peuvent servir à mettre à découvert les vrais motifs cachés derrière les actions des personnages:

Tout le monde fut pour lui, non pas parce qu'il était dans le bon chemin, non pas parce qu'il était raisonnable, mais parce qu'il était premier vizir. (*Zadig*, 18)

Ses parents seulement étaient affligés, car ils n'héritaient pas. (*Zadig*, 12)

Le roi embrasse ce bon danseur, le déclare trésorier, et tous les autres furent punis et taxés avec la plus grande justice du monde, car chacun, dans le temps qu'il avait été dans la galerie, avait rempli ses poches et pouvait à peine marcher. (*Zadig*, App., 62)

Le chroniqueur se permet également d'établir un rapport de causalité entre des faits que les héros seraient tentés de considérer comme une heureuse coïncidence, alors que ce sont autant d'actions préméditées motivées par la convoitise:

Comme il [Candide] avait au doigt un diamant énorme, et qu'on avait aperçu dans son équipage une cassette prodigieusement

pesante, il eut aussitôt auprès de lui deux médecins qu'il n'avait pas mandés, quelques amis intimes qui ne le quittèrent pas, et deux dévotes qui faisaient chauffer ses bouillons. (*Candide*, 190)

Des causales sont souvent rattachées aux mots donnés en italique auxquels elles fournissent une explication inattendue ironisant ainsi l'acception traditionnelle donnée au mot ou tour souligné (c'est Voltaire qui souligne)[10]:

La dame d'honneur . . . dit que très souvent ce mot de berger était appliqué aux rois, qu'on les appelait *bergers* parce qu'ils tondent de fort près leur troupeau. (*Princesse de Babylone*, 352)

Après le dîner . . . il s'entretenait avec un membre du parlement; car chacun sait que dès lors il y avait un parlement, et qu'il s'appelait *wittenagemoth*, ce qui signifie *l'assemblée de gens d'esprit.* (*Princesse de Babylone*, 383)

Dans l'explication suivante, le chroniqueur fait ironiquement appel au public général ('car il faut convenir que') pour restreindre la nature des femmes au rôle partiel exigé par le moment:

Elle court chez ce commis; la vue d'une belle femme l'adoucit, car il faut convenir que Dieu n'a créé les femmes que pour apprivoiser les hommes. (*L'Ingénu*, 260)

Le raisonnement naïf

Un des thèmes chers à Voltaire est l'opposition des pays dits sauvages et de la civilisation occidentale. Sans aller jusqu'aux extrêmes de Rousseau, Voltaire tente de rappeler à ses lecteurs que cette civilisation tant vantée est souvent inférieure en noblesse morale à celle des peuplades dites primitives. Les Chinois se distinguent par leur sagesse naturelle, la paix de l'âme est l'apanage

[10] le procédé ironique des mots et locutions en italique ferait le sujet d'une étude spéciale; nous n'en avons utilisé que les exemples suivis d'une causale.

des Hindous, le roi d'Eldorado et ses sujets ont la perspicacité de refuser tout contact avec un monde corrupteur. Libre des préjugés inculqués par un enseignement traditionnel, ces 'sauvages' ont gardé une vue fraîche des choses. Le chroniqueur de *L'Ingénu* (261) rappelle ainsi au lecteur que les progrès faits par le Huron dans les sciences sont justement dus à la fraîcheur de son raisonnement dont aucun enseignement n'était venu jusque-là entraver le fonctionnement. Mais, ce raisonnement franc et spontané prédispose ces 'sauvages' à tomber dans les pièges que leur tend l'hypocrisie des chrétiens. Ainsi le vieil Indien de *Histoire de Jenni* suit bravement ce qu'il considère comme son devoir pour ne récolter que l'ingratitude; il croit naïvement aux promesses que lui avaient faites des blancs:

'Le père de milord Baltimore d'aujourd'hui me rencontra, me mit entre les mains de son missionnaire, et je lui dus la vie. Je lui rendis bientôt ce que je lui devais, car je lui sauvai la sienne dans un combat contre une horde voisine'. (*Histoire de Jenni*, 517)

'Bon Anglais, repartit le vieillard, je suis très aise que celui qui est parti de chez moi avec ma fille soit ton fils, car il est beau, bien fait et paraît courageux (...) Ces voyageurs me la rendront avant qu'il ne soit un mois, car ils me l'ont promis'.

(*Histoire de Jenni*, 518)

Avant de faire goûter au vieillard l'amère déception de perdre sa fille, le chroniqueur a soin de lui faire rencontrer le sage Anglais Freind, grâce à qui la jeune Indienne pourra rentrer chez son père.

Interprété selon les coutumes en vigueur dans un pays 'sauvage', en l'occurrence l'Inde, le geste sensuel d'un missionnaire hypocrite est pris naïvement pour une preuve de sincérité:

Enfin, au son d'une cloche, il est sorti de ma chambre en me prenant la main, et en la mettant sur son cœur. C'est le signe visible de la sincérité, qui est invisible. Puisqu'il a mis ma main sur son cœur, il ne me trompera pas. (*Lettres d'Amabed*, 435)

Formés selon des règles différentes de celles en vigueur chez les blancs, ces primitifs font ressortir clairement l'absurdité de certains faits et situations acceptés depuis longtemps dans les pays qu'ils visitent. Ce procédé satirique savamment utilisé par Montesquieu dans les *Lettres persanes* prend chez Voltaire souvent la forme de causales présuppositives. Ce qui aux yeux de ces primitifs est l'évidence même, est 'apparemment' resté obscur aux civilisés:

Les Européens disent que ce breuvage [le vin] leur donne de l'esprit: comment cela peut-il être, puisqu'il leur ôte la raison?

(*Lettres d'Amabed*, 449)

On nous avertit même que quiconque y passe la nuit est en danger de mort. Apparemment que Dieu est fâché contre son vicaire [le pape], puisqu'il lui a donné un pays qui est le cloaque de la nature. (*Lettres d'Amabed*, 454)

La causalité implicite

Les exemples donnés jusqu'ici contenaient une causalité explicite sous forme de propositions causales. Cette causalité explicite servait à souligner le désir d'argumenter toujours présent chez les théologiens ou imposé aux autres personnages par des circonstances particulières. Mais, étant donné les possibilités offertes par le style coupé, ce travail serait incomplet s'il ignorait la causalité implicite dont A. François a parlé dans *Histoire de la langue française*. Voici l'exemple qu'il nous propose:

Guillaume Pen hérita de grands biens, parmi lesquels il se trouvait des dettes de la Couronne pour des avances faites par le Vice-Amiral dans des expéditions maritimes. Rien n'était moins assuré alors que l'argent dû par le Roi; Pen fut obligé d'aller tutoyer Charles II et ses ministres plus d'une fois pour son paiement. Le gouvernement lui donna, en 1680, au lieu d'argent, la propriété d'une province d'Amérique au sud du Marilan; voilà un Quaker devenu souverain.

D'après François, la brièveté de l'idée principale, enclose dans la dernière petite proposition, suggère qu'un hasard singulier préside à la fortune des individus. De plus, l'individu en question, par la nature de sa croyance religieuse, devrait refuser d'attacher trop d'importance aux biens terrestres.

Mais en de nombreux endroits, le style coupé à valeur causale caractérise la probité des personnages présentés. Ces personnages se distinguent par leurs opinions solides qu'ils n'ont pas besoin de motiver à l'aide d'une subordination explicite. Le roi d'Eldorado est doué ainsi d'un jugement sain et précis qui lui vaut l'admiration du chroniqueur:

'Quand on est passablement quelque part, il faut y rester. Je n'ai pas assurément le droit de retenir des étrangers; c'est une tyrannie qui n'est ni dans nos mœurs ni dans nos lois; tous les hommes sont libres, partez quand vous voudrez'.

(*Candide*, 180)

Avant de tomber dans les bras d'un clergé hypocrite et borné, qui sera coupable de l'échec du roi d'Egypte de la *Princesse de Babylone*, les Egyptiens avaient été 'justes et humains'. Leur justice était simple, claire, évidente:

Les Egyptiens étaient alors justes et humains. Le peuple conduisit Zadig à la maison de la ville.... On reconnut que Zadig n'était point un assassin; mais il était coupable du sang d'un homme: la loi le condamnait à être esclave. (*Zadig*, 26)

Une habitante du harem appartenant au riche seigneur Ogul trahit son origine simple à travers l'ignorance du rapport causal qui rattache deux données:

'Le seigneur Ogul est malade; son médecin lui a ordonné de manger un basilic cuit dans l'eau de rose'. (*Zadig*, 42)

La motivation détaillée de certaines actions est escamotée pour souligner la cruauté incompréhensible de l'Inquisition. De nouveau, la 'technique du projecteur' (Auerbach) coupe une idée de ses motifs complémentaires pour faire violemment ressortir le décalage démesuré entre l'apparente insignifiance du crime et l'énormité du châtiment:

On avait en conséquence saisi un Biscayen convaincu d'avoir épousé sa commère, et deux Portugais qui en mangeant un poulet en avaient arraché le lard. (*Candide*, 149)

Les motifs de l'arrestation des deux Portugais sont relégués à une relative parfaitement anodine, ce qui renforce encore la valeur satirique du passage.

A côté des causales objectives sous forme de discours direct et des raisons cachées découvertes par le chroniqueur, l'*Ingénu* offre un certain nombre de passages de style coupé à valeur causale. Les rapports de cause ne sont pas explicitement donnés pour mettre en relief le raisonnement naïf et dangereux, parce qu'il transforme des lieux communs en arguments favorables à une guerre, et à travers *Candide* nous connaissons l'opinion de Voltaire sur l'inutilité de ces 'boucheries héroïques'. La petite provinciale, mlle de Kerkabon (ne faudrait-il pas voir dans ce nom, habilement bretonnisé, l'usage satirique du mot *kerk* pour *église*?), dans sa dangereuse naïveté, ne se rend pas compte de l'injustice des causes et des déductions qu'elle avance:

'Voilà comme sont les maudits Anglais, criait mademoiselle de Kerkabon, ils feront plus de cas d'une pièce de Shakespeare et d'une bouteille de rhum que du Pentateuque. Aussi n'ont-ils jamais converti personne en Amérique. Certainement ils sont maudits de Dieu, et nous leur prendrons la Jamaïque et la Virginie avant qu'il soit peu de temps'. (*L'Ingénu*, 230-231)

Mlle de Kerkabon, représentante de la 'vox populi' du siècle, rapproche Shakespeare d'une bouteille de rhum, passe au manque

de zèle missionnaire des Anglais et sait pour sûr que les Anglais sont damnés, ce qui lui fournit la raison d'une guerre coloniale profitable. Le chroniqueur nous y peint le raisonnement type du public d'alors. Même dans des circonstances moins importantes, mlle de Kerkabon ne sait pas ordonner ses propositions:

'Il est jeune, il est Bas-Breton, il ne peut savoir comme on doit se comporter à la cour. Nous sommes coupables de son âme; c'est nous qui l'avons fait baptiser; sa chère maîtresse St. Yves passe les jours à pleurer'. (*L'Ingénu*, 257)

Effrayée par l'incarcération inattendue de son mari, la jolie femme de l'Indien Amabed, dans sa naïveté qu'il s'agit d'opposer à l'astuce chrétienne, ne voit pas les motifs véritables cachés derrière l'intérêt que lui consacre le missionnaire hypocrite:

Je lui ai fait tant de présents quand il m'enseignait l'italien! Il a fait des vers italiens pour moi, il ne peut pas me haïr.

(*Lettres d'Amabed*, 439)

L'absence de signe causal dans ces exemples sert trois fins satiriques. Elle caractérise premièrement le raisonnement sournois fait par des Tartuffes, elle met deuxièmement en lumière les dangers inhérents à une certaine étourderie dans la pensée, et troisièmement, elle provoque la sympathie du lecteur pour les 'primitifs' restés sans défense devant l'astuce de leurs adversaires chrétiens.

Essai de conclusion

Le récit rapide des contes et romans refuse au lecteur le temps de s'apitoyer sur le sort des personnages fantoches. Voltaire nous dit qu'il destine ce genre de narration à d'autres fins. Selon le vieux censeur qui rédige l'approbation fictive de *Zadig*, ce conte est 'curieux, amusant, philosophique, digne de plaire à ceux qui haïssent le roman'[11]. Ces petits romans ne sont pas conçus pour

[11] l'approbation fictive du censeur est reproduite dans l'édition Pléiade des *Contes* (éd. R. Groos, Paris 1961), p.662.

satisfaire la 'sensibilité' du lecteur, mais tendent à mettre en évidence la façon de penser du public. Leurs nombreuses péripéties sont bâties sur des successions de propositions principales très brèves, ce que Barber (p.15) a comparé à la technique d'un film nuet projeté à double allure. La syntaxe devient plus complexe quand l'argumentation des personnages est à soumettre au jugement du lecteur. La rapidité de l'action est alors retardée par une sorte de 'duos' où s'exhibe la fausse bravoure des adversaires. Cette bravoure est fausse parce que de nombreux passages des *Contes* nous révèlent que les personnes raisonnables, comme par exemple les Chinois, ont besoin de peu de paroles pour comprendre:

> [Zadig] ne dit que très peu de chose à l'homme du Cathay, parce qu'il avait été le plus raisonnable de tous. (*Zadig*, 33)

L'Anglais Freind fait une grande impression sur le chroniqueur de l'*Histoire de Jenni* (544) car il l'avait entendu 'prononcer au parlement un discours ferme et serré, sans aucun lieu commun, sans épithètes, sans ce que nous appelons des phrases'. Du moment que les personnages se mettent à épiloguer sur les motifs et les raisons de leur condition, de leurs actions ou de la religion, Voltaire s'empresse de rapporter avec une feinte impartialité la verbalité de leur raisonnement. Ce raisonnement est alors clairement absurde, subjectif ou naïf. Voltaire se sert des infractions à la fiction contemporaine de l'auteur-rapporteur pour démasquer les motifs hypocrites de certains personnages. Même dans les passages sans hypotaxe 'où l'intelligence supplée à l'absence de signes de rapport' (François, ii.68), l'intelligence des lecteurs est appelée à découvrir une intention hypocrite ou une naïveté dangereuse à la vie en société.

En tant que *Aufklärer* et pédagogue dans le sens le plus élevé du mot, Voltaire voulait enjoindre à son public de se remettre à penser objectivement et de se méfier de la hiérarchisation de la pensée qu'est l'utilisation des subordonnées, surtout des causales.

Propagateur de la notion de relativité, il tentait de délivrer la société d'alors des hypothèques entravant la prise de conscience; ces hypothèques, c'étaient, comme l'a si bien dit Auerbach (p.384) les données religieuses, politiques et économiques tellement enchevêtrées qu'il ne pouvait plus s'agir de les justifier, mais de les faire tomber en discrédit.

Bolingbroke and the diffusion of Newtonianism in France

by Dennis J. Fletcher

When Bolingbroke fled to France in March 1715 to avoid the harsh treatment which he fully expected to receive from the whigs who had come to power on the death of queen Anne, he could have had little idea that he was entering upon the most important decade of his intellectual life. The heavy, but welcome, demands of a successful political career, culminating in the tenure of the office of secretary of state and the personal negotiation of the treaty of Utrecht, had left him little time to indulge a natural love of study. Two years of enforced political inactivity, before his accession to high office in a tory government in 1710, had given him the opportunity to allow some scope to an inquiring mind, but a lengthier, more systematic course of intellectual self-improvement had to wait upon the more favourable circumstances which were furnished by a period of exile which was not to end until 1725. After an abortive attempt to assure himself regular political employment as secretary of state to the Pretender, Bolingbroke was forced to seek other outlets for his abundant energy. The satisfaction of his appetite for reading and discussion brought him into touch with some of the liveliest minds of the time; his ardent pursuit of knowledge benefited others by promoting the exchange of ideas between thinkers of different persuasions to whom he extended his hospitality. His country-house at La Source, near Orléans, can be considered, in this respect, as an important centre for the dissemination of ideas in many fields.

One of these fields was that of scientific thought, and it was almost inevitable that his home should have provided a forum for the discussion of one of the most controversial questions of the day: the opposition between Cartesian and Newtonian ideas. The period of his exile coincides with that of the penetration of Newtonianism into France, and there is evidence to suggest that he made some contribution to this chapter in the history of science, by stimulating clarification of Newton's thought, through confrontation with that of Descartes, and thus preparing the way for the general acceptance of the English scientist's ideas upon the continent later in the century. It is important to bear in mind the universally acknowledged force of Bolingbroke's personality, and his almost legendary capacity as a parliamentary orator when considering the diffusion of ideas discussed by him and his friends, for the latter were frequently more knowledgeable but less articulate than he was: it is probable that they often provided him with the ammunition which he was able to use to better effect than they thanks to his more impressive armoury of rhetorical weapons.

Although Bolingbroke's primary rôle was that of promoter rather than propagator, it is unlikely that his commanding physical presence and compelling eloquence (he was equally at home in French and English) did not occasionally sway some of his uncommitted guests in favour of an opinion forcefully expressed. He readily represents himself at the outset of his exile as a mere novice in philosophy, but it is probable that his philosophical apprenticeship was not long over before he assumed that magisterial tone which is characteristic of the essays he later addressed to Alexander Pope, who had no hesitation in acclaiming him as a full-blown philosopher on his return from France[1]. Certainly, the

[1] 'Lord B[olingbroke] is the most *Improv'd Mind* since you saw him, that ever was improved without shifting into a new body or being Paullo minus ab angelis'; *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford 1956), in.33n (to Swift, 15 October 1725). Lord Orrery also remarks upon the transformation in his *Remarks on the life and writings of dr. Jonathan Swift* (3rd ed., 1752), p.155.

Substance of some letters addressed to m. de Pouilly of 1720 already gives an excellent idea of the vigour and confidence with which Bolingbroke engaged an opponent in debate and expounded a point of view. It is with obvious relish that he tells his friends of the impact his powers of persuasion had upon those who listened to the discussion.

The importance of Bolingbroke as an agent in the diffusion of Newtonianism is considerably diminished if we accept the view, expressed by D. G. James in his *The Life of reason*, that he was 'no great gospeller of science' (p.238), and not 'a notable devotee of scientific knowledge and methods' (p.237). Neither the evidence we have of his contacts and activities in France, during his exile, nor that furnished by the philosophical essays he wrote later, however, suggests that this view is acceptable without serious qualification. Bolingbroke's knowledge of science may have been superficial, but his interest in it was deep and lasting, and this interest colours his deistic philosophy, giving it a distinctive quality, as one of Bolingbroke's more recent commentators has remarked, through the special emphasis which is placed upon 'the importance of science's contribution to the demonstration of God's wisdom and power'[2]. Bolingbroke himself is quite clear about what constitutes the fundamental significance of science for him: 'The true foundations of natural theology must be laid in natural philosophy'[3]. Unfortunately, in his desire to emphasise the practical importance of scientific truth, he sometimes tends to dismiss rather airily those acquainted with its more esoteric aspects, in much the same way as his insistence upon the use of history leads him to berate certain scholars for the value they attach to useless erudition. This trait of his can be misleading; in a discussion of the effects of the obliquity of the plane of the ecliptic upon the development of life on earth, for instance, he flaunts his ignorance of the more arcane arguments

[2] W. M. Merril, *From Statesman to philosopher: a study in Bolingbroke's deism* (New York 1949), p.28.

[3] *Works* (1809), vi.275. All references in the text are to this edition.

put forward by the experts ('I enter not into particulars . . . I shall leave philosophers and mathematicians to dispute as long as they please'; iv.462-463), yet shows that he has more than a nodding acquaintance with their views. His dislike of pedantry, and his impatience with the excessive pretensions of some scientists (a feeling shared by his friends in the Scriblerus club) leads him to affect a rugged common sense and to gear his discussion to the intellectual level of 'the plain man', to whom he continually refers as the ultimate arbiter in any discussion. This rôle of the intelligent layman addressing his fellows obviously suits him well, but it can give a false impression of the extent of his knowledge of a subject, and even of his interest in it. Take the following statement, for example: 'I rely on the authority of my cook, when I eat my soup; on the authority of my apothecary when I take a dose of rhubarb; on that of Graham, when I buy my watch; and on that of Sir Isaac Newton, when I believe in the doctrine of gravitation; because I am neither cook, apothecary, watchmaker, nor mathematician'[4].

Bolingbroke's acceptance of gravity as one of the laws of the physical universe or his rejection of Cartesian physics is not just a matter of blind faith, as he implies here. In fact, he enjoyed the benefit of friendship with thinkers who were thoroughly conversant with both the opposing systems of ideas, and this extraordinarily privileged position gave him a scientific grounding sufficiently unusual in a non-mathematician as to earn him a (admittedly exaggerated) reputation in some circles as 'un Seigneur . . . dont le vaste génie embrasse toutes les sciences'[5]. He had been privileged, also, insofar as he had for a time attended the dissenting academy of Sheriffhales in Shropshire, one of the very few educational establishments of the time which included practical science as part of the curriculum. The interest thus

[4] *ibid.*, vi.272. Cf. v.188: 'a knowledge of physical nature is not the immediate and necessary concern of every man and therefore a further inquiry into it becomes the labour of few, though the fruits of this inquiry be to the advantage of many'.

[5] *Réflexions sur les ouvrages de littérature*, ed. F. Granet, (1739), vii.303.

awakened during this early period of his life was pursued later at La Source, where part of his self-imposed course of study was taken up with experimental physics.

Another factor which should be taken into account in assessing the nature of Bolingbroke's interest in science is the extent to which he shared the prevailing attitude towards the discussion of scientific subjects in the milieux which he frequented. To many of the *salonnières* and their satellites Newtonianism was rebarbative because of its uncompromising reliance on geometry, and they turned to the more accessible ideas of Descartes whose appeal was enhanced by the literary artifices and embellishments of a populariser like Fontenelle. Bolingbroke grudgingly concedes that 'such a philosopher as Fontenelle might dispense with some want of precision in favour of his gallantry' (iv.480), but generally shows little taste for 'his pretty book of the Plurality of Worlds' (vi.173), which he regards as superficial, and lacking in originality[6]: Fontenelle and Houdard de La Motte are dismissed as elegant triflers; Bolingbroke was inclined to regard the quest for knowledge as a serious matter, and is fond of representing himself as rather old-fashioned in the austerity of his taste for truth without trimmings. His friend Swift's slogan 'Vive la bagatelle!' prompts some very high-minded considerations (in his 'Of the true use of retirement and study') on the superiority of edifying discussion to idler pleasures, and the general impression which he gives in his letters is that when he, the studious hermit, is dragged away from his books into conversation, he is always ready to give it a serious turn in the direction of his own intellectual preoccupations.

Not all friends were so convinced of the importance of being earnest. The *abbé* Conti, who gained a certain notoriety as mediator in the controversy between Newton and Leibniz, was resolutely flippant about his intellectual pursuits, referring to 'la philosophie expérimentale et les mathématiques' he declared:

[6] *Lettres historiques, philosophiques et particulières*, ed. Grimoard (Paris 1808), iii.60; Bolingbroke to Argental, January 1721, and p.288, Bolingbroke to Alary, 9/20 May 1726.

'J'aime beaucoup ces sortes d'études; mais elles ne m'inquiètent guère, et dans le fond je n'en estime pas plus l'objet que le quadrille ou la chasse'[7]. This indifference was not obvious when he was engaged in trying to win convinced Cartesians over to Newtonianism; as a poet of no mean ability he was able to demonstrate that the followers of Descartes did not have a monopoly of imagination and that Fontenelle was not unique in being able to reconcile fact and fancy. The latter's high opinion of the Italian did nothing to win reciprocal admiration. Conti thought that Fontenelle's attempts at popularisation of scientific knowledge had fallen flat: 'Quand la pluralité des mondes vit le jour, les gens de la Cour disaient, le livre est bon pour l'observatoire et les gens de l'observatoire répondaient, il est bon pour les gens de la Cour'[8]. He had his own ideas about the amount of sugar with which the pill should be coated for consumption by ladies of fashion, and has left indications of the way in which he foreshadowed his compatriot Algarotti's efforts to provide 'il newtonianismo per le dame'. A good example of his technique is the 'Dialogue sur la nature de l'amour', addressed to mme de V.... (possibly mme de Villette, Bolingbroke's wife), in which the perennial subject is tackled in a thoroughly scientific manner, and Conti can be seen attempting to overthrow the intellectual obstacles of Cartesianism which his female interlocutor opposes to his advocacy of Newton and Locke. In this particular case, the *abbé*'s efforts are unavailing; he seems to suggest at the outset that neither Newton nor Leibniz will be able to oust Descartes and Malebranche from the lady's favour: 'Ne craignez, Mlle, ni attractions ni Monades'; he says, 'vous n'aurez à la fin, que de l'étenduë intelligible & des petits tourbillons' (*Prose*, vol.ii, p.lxxx). He could not have always been so unsuccessful, however, and the experiments he often carried out with the aid of scientific

[7] N. Fréret, *Réponse aux Observations sur la chronologie de m. Newton avec une lettre de M...* [*Conti*], *au sujet de la dite réponse* (Paris 1726), p.28.

[8] *Prose e poesie del signor abate Conti* (Venezia 1739-1756), vol.ii, p.cxii.

apparatus he had brought across with him from England must have added weight to the arguments vigorously advanced on many occasions in favour of Newtonianism. Conti presents himself as one of the most spirited defenders of Newton's system: in the *Réponse* (p.19) he cites numerous witnesses to support this claim, and among these 'Mylord et Mylady de Boulinbroke' are mentioned as having very frequently heard him speak in support of the English scientist's ideas.

To those perplexed by the problem of choosing between the rival systems of Newton and Descartes, Conti offers a rough and ready guide: 'Or, pour se déterminer en faveur d'un principe plutôt que d'un autre, il faut voir si on veut preferir ce que Mr. Newton appelle experience et observations, à ce que les Cartesiens appellent idée claire et distincte, ou si on veut faire le contraire. Quand les systèmes sont differens, il faut peser leurs degrès de probabilité, et se determiner après pour les degrès dans lesquels les hypotheses sont plus simples, & en plus petit nombre, & qui donnent des explications courtes et elegantes d'un grand nombre des phenomenes' (*Prose*, vol.ii, p.ciii).

This drastic oversimplification would give a false picture of the early stages of the debate when there was a great deal of verbal give and take; certain terms had not yet hardened into catch-phrases and become the exclusive property of one side or the other. 'Experience', for example, was used by Newtonians and Cartesians alike, with the former stressing the value of what may be gained by experiment and observation of physical phenomena, and the latter emphasising intuitive knowledge of reality, and the snares of sensory perception. Understandably, neither side wished to concede a monopoly of the use of reason to the other, but it is clear that when they use this word the Cartesians are usually referring to deductive, the Newtonians to inductive reasoning. Nevertheless, Conti's broad analysis does reveal the essential opposition between the empirical approach of the adherents of Newton's ideas and the apriorism of the disciples of Descartes. Bolingbroke's intellectual evolution mirrors the contrary forces

working upon educated French society during his exile; his friends numbered Cartesians and Newtonians, capable of highly informed criticism of each other's views, and their influence resulted in a gradual clarification of his own anti-Cartesian position. There is a certain residue of Cartesianism in his philosophy, however, and this is not surprising if we remember that his initiation to philosophical studies was due to a friend who was among the first to understand and expound Newton's *Principia* in France, and yet possessed 'le goût de la plus pure métaphysique' to such an extent that he never renounced his primary allegiance to Descartes.

'You led me first in my retreat to abstract philosophical reasonings', Bolingbroke acknowledges in the *Substance*. Since Bolingbroke says he was forty years of age when this initiation took place, his acquaintance with his 'confrère en philosophie' as he called him can be dated from 1718 at the latest. Lévesque de Pouilly was held in the very highest esteem by his English friend, who was glad to invite him to continue their discussions at his country house at Dawley when Pouilly spent a year in England, after Bolingbroke's return from exile in 1725. Voltaire, who had been on terms of the closest friendship with them both in the year before Bolingbroke's departure for England, maintained this relationship with Pouilly, to whom he refers in 1742 as 'mon ami, de Pouilly, homme d'une vaste érudition, et cependant aimable, doux, facile, comme s'il n'était pas savant' (Best.2473). Bolingbroke, for his part, became estranged from Voltaire, but retained a place for Pouilly in a new Olympian triumvirate, as can be seen from the letter in the 5th edition of *La Théorie des sentiments agréables*, addressed to its author: 'Enfin, mon cher Pouilly, dans cette foule d'hommes que j'ai pu connaître et dont j'ai cherché à étudier l'esprit et le caractère, je n'en ai encore vu que trois qui m'aient parus dignes qu'on leur confiât le soin de gouverner des nations . . . ces trois hommes sont vous, Pope, et moi'.

Besides his study of experimental physics at La Source, under Pouilly's direction, Bolingbroke mentions rather apologetically

in a 1724 letter to another friend the *abbé* Alary that metaphysics is taking up part of their time. He hastens to add: 'mais c'est la métaphysique qui est fondée sur des idées claires et déterminées' (*Lettres historiques*, iii.236). The interpretation of what constituted the sort of clear and distinct ideas acceptable in the pursuit of knowledge left room for considerable disagreement between Pouilly and his protégé, however, and it is clear that Bolingbroke's rejection of innate ideas rather than of Cartesian physics was to establish the fundamental divergence between them, which is referred to in letters Pouilly wrote to their mutual friend the chancelier Daguesseau. It would seem that having been led to 'abstract philosophical reasonings' by Pouilly Bolingbroke could not accept them, finally, in the same way as his 'guide, philosopher and friend'. In the *Substance*, Bolingbroke explains: 'We do not like reasoners "a priori", imagine what may have been according to our abstract reasonings, and so conclude from possibility to actuality. We proceed much more reasonably from actuality to possibility, in a method so often, and so absurdly reversed by philosophers' (iv.460-461). His criterion of truth is presented in his later philosophical *Essays*: 'clear and determinate ideas, duly abstracted from the phaenomena of nature and . . . an intuitive knowledge of their agreement or disagreement' (v.318). Descartes, treated as a philosopher of genius, fundamentally misguided, is damned in the following words: 'He who departs from the analytic method, to establish general propositions concerning the phaenomena on assumptions, and who reasons from these assumptions afterward, on inward sentiments of evidence, as they are called, instead of clear and real ideas, lays aside the only sure guides to knowledge' (v.175). Pouilly, for his part, despite his adherence to Newtonian physics, did not, like Bolingbroke (and later Voltaire), consider Lockean epistemology as a successful application to the study of the mind of the principles used by Newton in his study of matter.

Pouilly's firm grasp of Newtonian ideas assumes added importance in the light of his intellectual relations with Bolingbroke,

nevertheless, for the latter through his numerous contacts provided a wider channel of diffusion for these ideas. Voltaire's claim to primacy in the extensive popularisation of Newtonianism remains intact despite his acknowledgement of Pouilly's superiority in this branch of knowledge, in a letter of 1738 to one of Pouilly's brothers Lévesque de Burigny: 'Cette philosophie [*i. e.* Newton's] a plus d'un droit sur vous: elle est la seule vraie et monsieur votre frère de Pouilli est le premier en France qui l'ait connue. Je n'ai que le mérite d'avoir osé effleurer le premier en public, ce qu'il eût approfondi s'il eût voûlu' (Best.1558). Public discussion of Newtonianism had certainly taken place before Voltaire's masterly *œuvres de vulgarisation* appeared, but had only reached a restricted circle of the educated public. Credit must nevertheless be given to the brothers Lévesque who were concerned (Burigny particularly) with directing the publication of a learned monthly journal dealing with science and the arts, called *L'Europe savante.* This short-lived periodical did something to promote the spread of Newtonian ideas in France by presenting such confrontations as that between the rigidly Cartesian disciple of Malebranche, Rémond de Montmort and the eminent English mathematician, and secretary of the Royal society, Brook Taylor, a convinced Newtonian. Rémond de Montmort's fair-minded recapitulation of what his opponents judged to be 'les défectuosités du système de M. Descartes' must have been quite as effective in convincing many readers of the greater validity of Newton's ideas as Taylor's terse rejoinders to his Cartesian friend's criticism of these ideas. Both men knew Bolingbroke well. Taylor had visited Paris in 1716 at the pressing invitation of Rémond de Montmort, who had himself visited England in the previous year, in the company of Conti, to observe the solar eclipse: the comte de Caylus was very friendly with this little circle of *savants* and it is likely that he introduced Bolingbroke to them at this time. Brook Taylor stayed at La Source in 1720, and as their correspondence shows he remained, until his death in 1731, a very close friend of Bolingbroke.

The letters which Conti wrote to Taylor do not suggest the same degree of intimacy; the *abbé* seems mainly concerned with using the Englishman as an intermediary in his efforts to redeem himself in Newton's eyes, after the bad feeling created by the controversy with Leibniz. Those which passed between Taylor and Rémond de Montmort give a good idea of the divergence between the views of Newtonians and Cartesians at this time: the Frenchman recognises clearly the ideological gulf between him and the separated brethren across the channel: 'Nous sommes encore plus divisés sur la physique que nos théologiens ne le sont entre eux. Quoy que l'on voye un peu plus clair dans la philosophie que dans la religion notre réunion sera difficile, *nam toto coelo distamus*'[9]. This opposition on the intellectual plane stands in contrast, however, with the genuine warmth of feeling which evidently characterised the personal relations between the two scientists.

It would be difficult to assess with any accuracy the part Bolingbroke played in the debate between his Cartesian and Newtonian friends. It is worth examining a little further the ideas he expresses in his published works and those which are discussed by his friends in the articles in *L'Europe savante*. These articles probably represent an echo of the discussions which took place whenever Bolingbroke provided a forum for them. Whether Bolingbroke's views, formulated for the most part in the period after 1735 and not published until 1754, can be taken as an indication of his contribution to the discussions, or whether they may be used merely as a guide to the orientation of his intellectual education at a certain phase in his life, they can be offered as fairly reliable evidence of the rôle he was able to play, as a voluntary resident in France later in his life, in the process of proselytising those among his hosts who remained doggedly Cartesian in their sympathies, who were still, as he put it, 'tenacious of an hypothesis neither deduced from the phaenomena, nor consistent with

[9] letter from Rémond de Montmort to Brook Taylor, 31 March 1716, in an appendix to Brook Taylor's *Contemplatio philosophica* (1793).

them, and averse to receive, or, at least, extremely scrupulous about receiving, a system built on observation and experiment, not on assumption, and which all the phaenomena conspire to establish' (v.177).

Certain themes recur in the Newton versus Descartes debate; we find what were bones of contention between Taylor and Montmort still being gnawed at by Bolingbroke in the epistolary essays he wrote after 1730. These essays were, as he admits to Pope, little different in form and substance from the numerous conversations they had had together. It is probable that similar conversations afforded Bolingbroke's acquaintances across the Channel with the benefit of his views on, amongst other topics, the issues which divided Newtonians and Cartesians.

One of these issues was the rôle to be accorded to hypotheses in the pursuit of truth. 'Hypothesis' was a word not used with complete consistency by Newton, but his hostility to hypotheses, nevertheless, constitutes one of the salient features of his scientific thought, as so often pointed out approvingly by Voltaire. The exchange of ideas between Rémond de Montmort and Brook Taylor in *L'Europe savante* shows how the disciples of Newton concentrated an important part of their attack on the Cartesian predilection for hypothesis. Rémond de Montmort notes how this charge recurs in Taylor's works and in Cotes's preface to the second edition of the *Principia*, and rejects it. He denies that the Cartesians are any more guilty of indulging in hypothesis by admitting the plenum, than the Newtonians in accepting the existence of the void. 'Ce qui est tiré de l'Idée claire des choses', he says, 'ce que tous les phénomènes exigent, ce qui en est une conséquence ne peut être regardé comme une Hypothèse gratuite'[10]. Montmort seems to be trying to establish some common ground between the two sides, but the gulf can be seen widening even as he is making the attempt. A welcoming hand seems to be offered to English empiricism, when he says: 'Si le principe est bien établi,

[10] *L'Europe savante* (octobre 1718), v.260.

ou a priori ou par les Faits, il faut s'y ternir ferme' (*L'Europe savante*, v.275). It is noticeable, however, that what he calls the 'Idée claire des choses' is the over-riding factor in his decision to accept a theory: 'Je conçois le plein . . . je ne puis concevoir le Vide' (*L'Europe savante*, v.260). Both Taylor and Montmort invoke the dual criterion of 'la Raison et l'Expérience', but Taylor clearly attaches more importance to the second term; speaking for all Newtonians, he says: 'Nous disons, seulement le fait, comme l'Expérience nous l'apprend' (*L'Europe savante*, ix.96). Thus, the whole of Cartesian physics is rejected as invalid, because it is divorced from experience: 'Pour ce qui est de former des Hypothèses, vous savez que nous accusons tout votre système d'en être une' (*L'Europe savante*, ix.106). On the other hand, the force of gravity is something which observation of natural phenomena imposes upon the scientist: 'La Gravitation n'est pas une Hypothèse: c'est un Fait, dont l'Expérience nous oblige de tomber d'accord' (*L'Europe savante*, ix.97).

Bolingbroke devotes a fairly long section of his first essay to a discussion of hypotheses. He quotes the 'hypotheses non fingo' of the final general scholium of the *Principia*, and supports the tradition, established by Bacon and furthered by Newton, of antagonism towards the practice of feigning hypotheses, of using error to arrive at truth. 'The fautors of hypotheses would have us believe', he says 'that even the detection of their falsehood gives occasion to our improvement in knowledge. But the road to truth does not lie through the precincts of errour' (v.174). Whilst revealing his general adherence to this English tradition of empiricism, however, he shows real understanding of the equivocal nature of the term 'hypothesis'. He is at pains to show that false or feigned hypotheses have given the term a pejorative connotation which it does not wholly deserve. He remarks, very justly: 'An hypothesis, founded on mere arbitrary assumptions, will be a true hypothesis and therefore of service to philosophy, if it is confirmed by many observations afterward, and if no one phaenomenon stand in opposition to it' (v.173). In a later section

of the same essay, he insists on the need for verification in the light of fact, and says: 'With such precautions and under such restrictions, hypotheses can do no hurt, nor serve to propagate errour' (v.307). He points out that the Copernican system, as well as the Newtonian system of attraction, are really true hypotheses because they have been confirmed by abundant observation of nature's operations. Bolingbroke criticises some of his Newtonian compatriots, however, for broadcasting false hypotheses, in certain instances; he condemns them for presenting certain assumptions about the principle of attraction applied to 'insensible bodies, the *minima naturae* and insensible distances' as though they were susceptible of the same confirmation as the measurable phenomena on the strength of which the principle had already been so widely accepted (v.307). On the whole, however, Bolingbroke remains strongly anti-Cartesian in this matter. He is always willing to acknowledge Descartes's genius, and more than once stresses Newton's debt to the French philosopher, for the masterly way in which he had applied the study of geometry to physics, but his tone is never less than harsh when he considers the sins of Descartes, considered as one of the makers of 'hypothetical worlds' (iv.401). It is on this head that Descartes has most to answer for. 'His great reputation put hypotheses into fashion; and natural philosophy became a sort of physical romance' (v.306).

The discussion as to whether gravity could be termed an occult quality and a miracle or be accepted as a force and law of nature must have been a familiar one to Bolingbroke long before he introduced it into his own philosophical works. Leibniz, first of all, gave currency to the conception of attraction as an occult quality in a letter which was published in the *Memoires de Trévoux* in 1711, and which evoked a response from Newton in the *Scholium Generale* which Cotes inserted in the 2nd edition of the *Principia* in 1715. Bolingbroke was acquainted with this edition, and probably heard more on the same subject from Conti, to whom Leibniz in 1715 addressed a letter, in which he reasserted

his view: 'Et parce qu'on ne sait pas encore parfaitement et en détail comment se produit la gravité ou la force élastique, ou la magnétique: on n'a pas raison pour cela d'en faire des Qualitez occultes scholastiques, ou des Miracles'[11].

The topic almost inevitably came up for discussion between Taylor and Montmort. The latter mocks at the Newtonian attachment to what he calls 'des Vertus et des Qualitez secrètes' (*L'Europe savante*, v.227), he derides the whole idea of non-mechanical forces, and suggests that it is preferable to use the term 'miracle' wherever one's knowledge of mechanics suggests no explanation of a phenomenon. The Newtonians are charged with falling into obscurantism: 'il me paroît que c'est se jetter volontairement dans les ténèbres que d'abandonner les raisons communes, pour admettre comme Principes, des Forces et des Vertus dont on n'a aucune Idée; en sorte que s'il était vrai, comme vous le croiez, Monsieur, que nos Principes fûssent insuffisans pour l'Explication des phénomes [*sic*], il me semble évident, qu'il faudroit prendre son parti, se consoler de l'ignorance attachée à notre Nature, et renoncer plutôt à toutes les Recherches physiques, que de retomber dans le Jargon obscur du Péripatétisme' (*L'Europe savante*, v.233-234). Taylor did not take up the charge directly: he simply stated bluntly that far from being occult attraction was a matter of plain, observable fact: 'la Raison et l'Expérience nous font voir qu'il y a de l'Attraction qui n'est pas causée par l'Impulsion; mais nous n'assûrons rien sur les causes de l'attraction' (*L'Europe savante*, ix.96). Bolingbroke in his first essay devotes half a dozen or so pages to an examination of the use and abuse of the word 'force', and attempts to dispose of the objections raised by the association of the word 'occult' with that of the 'force' of gravity. He denies that Newtonians are emulating the peripatetics and schoolmen when they employ the term 'force' to describe the 'cause of effects that are known, but

[11] *Recueil de diverses pièces sur la philosophie*, ed. Desmaizeaux (3rd ed., Lausanne 1759), ii.8.

cannot be ascribed to any cause that is known' (v.287); furthermore, he argues that as 'the causality of apparent causes, and therefore, the first efficient causes in the order of second causes will be always occult, whatever hypothesis or system we follow' (v.281). Fontenelle is taken to task by Bolingbroke in the course of a short commentary on the 'Eloge de m. Newton' for insinuating that Newtonianism is nothing more than a recrudescence of scholasticism. Bolingbroke believes that 'nothing could be more despicable than the ignorance or malice of those, who . . . made him [Newton] an asserter of occult qualities'[12].

The Newtonians strongly criticized the Cartesian emphasis on the power of the human mind to penetrate the secrets of nature. Montmort's optimism about the progress of scientific knowledge is characteristic of the followers of Descartes: 'Si nos succès ne sont pas tels que nôtre curiosité nous porterait à le souhaiter, si nous avançons peu, au moins nous ne courons pas le risque, de nous égarer, en marchant sûrement et dans la lumière. Nous découvrirons tôt ou tard les secrets de la Nature ou du moins une partie de ses secrets' (*L'Europe savante*, v.277). He is proud of the Cartesian approach to the study of the physical world, which consists of an enquiry into the causes of phenomena, which leads the inquirer inevitably from immediate to more remote causes, and ultimately to god, the 'Cause unique, véritable et première de tout ce qui arrive dans l'Univers' (*L'Europe savante*, v.212). Taylor's cautious refusal to proceed beyond second causes characterises the Newtonian attitude: 'Nous prétendons ne savoir rien des métodes dont il a plu à la Sagesse Divine de se servir pour créer et pour maintenir le monde; et nous voions que toutes les analogies qu'on peut trouver pour bâtir des Raisonnements, se bornent aux Causes secondes et ne peuvent s'étendre assez loin pour découvrir rien touchant les Causes invisibles des effets merveilleux que nous voions produits dans la Nature' (*L'Europe savante*, ix.106-107).

[12] v.286. For an illuminating discussion on this subject see A. Koyré, *Newtonian studies* (London 1965), app.B.

Bolingbroke, for his part, is consciously Newtonian in his advocacy of 'learned ignorance'. He concurs with Montmort in judging the senses to be frequently inadequate as instruments in the pursuit of knowledge of the world around us, but thinks the Cartesians guilty of presumption in turning to the power of reason to help them in this dilemma. However imperfect our senses are, they are the only reliable guides, argues Bolingbroke: 'Sense and intellect must conspire in the acquisition of physical knowledge; but the latter must never proceed independently of the former. Experiment is that pillar of fire which can alone conduct us to the promised land; and they who lose sight of it, lose themselves in the dark wilds of imagination' (v.162). The audacious speculations of Descartes and his followers might encourage the delusion that a few great leaps would suffice to reach the end of the journey: an unmysterious universe which had rendered up all its secrets. Bolingbroke suggests that the road is much harder, that one can only inch one's way forward 'by the painful drudgery of experiment' (v.160), and that ignorance will be forever part of man's lot: 'the great secrets of nature, the real essences of substances, and the primary causes of their action, their passion and all their operations', would remain always impenetrable; 'mankind would cease to be, without having acquired a complete and real knowledge of the world they inhabited, and of the bodies they wore in it' (v.160). This seemly humility does not preclude a proper sense of pride in the progress of science and Bolingbroke does not omit to give his mead of praise to those who have applied themselves to experimental physics to such good effect, that man's knowledge of nature has advanced more in less than two centuries than in the twenty centuries preceding.

The enthusiastically studious life of Bolingbroke during his banishment and subsequent retirement in France may be thought to have some relevance to the diffusion of Newtonianism in that country, if we bear in mind the expatriate's belief that 'there is no study, after that of morality, which deserves the appreciation of the human mind so much as that of natural philosophy' (v.187).

To what extent his undeniable interest in contemporary science led him to spread the gospel according to Newton must remain, finally, a matter of conjecture. The opinions he pronounces in his written work certainly suggest that the Newtonians would have had in this denouncer of Cartesian heresy a particularly aggressive defender of the faith.

The Lettres persanes—*rococo or neo-classical?*

by Patrick Brady

Recent assessments. The *Lettres persanes* were published in 1721, that is, at the end of the *régence*. In the plastic arts, *régence* style is an early phase of rococo; the latter is the style which dominates the first half of the 18th century in France[1]. Of course, the plastic, musical, or literary works produced during this period do not necessarily all belong to the dominant aesthetic; it has nevertheless been asserted that the *Lettres* constitute an example of rococo style. We shall attempt a brief but systematic review of this question.

Several very interesting articles have recently been devoted to a study of the structure, meaning, and aesthetic of the *Lettres persanes*, one by Roger Laufer[2] in 1961, a second by Roger Mercier[3] in 1962, a third by Pauline Kra[4] in 1963, and a fourth by John Falvey[5] in 1965.

Not the least interesting aspect of the first two articles is that, while their titles are almost identical, they differ both in content

[1] see Patrick Brady, 'Rococo and Neo-classicism', *Studi francesi* (1964), xxii.34-49; 'Rococo Style in French literature', *Studi francesi* (1967), xxxi. 428-437.

[2] 'La Réussite romanesque et la signification des *Lettres persanes* de Montesquieu', *R.H.L.* (1961), lxi.180-201.

[3] 'Le Roman dans les *Lettres persanes*: structure et signification', *R.S.H.* (1962), cvii.344-356.

[4] 'The Invisible chain of the *Lettres persanes*', *Studies on Voltaire* (1963), xxiii.7-60.

[5] 'Aspects of fictional creation in the *Lettres persanes*, and of the aesthetic of the rationalist novel', *The Romanic review* (1965), lvi.240-261.

(m. Mercier is rather more interested in structure, m. Laufer in meaning) and in point of view (m. Laufer gives a Marxist interpretation, m. Mercier is more traditional).

Roger Laufer classifies the *Lettres persanes* in accordance with his theory of the rococo[6]: 'Au sortir de la grande époque classique et alors que la littérature conventionnelle reste prisonnière de l'esthétique post-classique — tel le *Temple de Cnyde* — les *Lettres persanes* sont, après *Le Diable boiteux* de 1707, un bel exemple du style rococo, auquel appartient la plus grande partie des chefs-d'œuvre romanesques du XVIIIe siècle'.

According to Roger Laufer, this is a rococo work:

a. because 'les éléments critiques ne sont pas méthodiquement ordonnés' (denied by mme Kra),

b. because of 'la disymmétrie de la présentation' and 'son harmonieux déséquilibre — un peu de légèreté, beaucoup de sérieux',

c. because, 'tout en revenant à la variété et au mouvement, il conserve le dépouillement et la clarté classiques'; and also,

d. 'le lent travelling du début rejoint le rapide gros plan des dernières séquences, conformément aux exigences du style rococo, c'est-à-dire d'un art de la mise en question'.

Roger Laufer sees the structure of the work as essentially dialectic, but he interprets this to mean, in this case as in many others, 'belonging to the rococo style'. Let us take one by one the points he makes, and apply a 'mise en question' of our own. We shall leave point (a) until last.

With regard to point (b) we must ask: Is the combination of 'un peu de légèreté, beaucoup de sérieux' sufficient to class a work as rococo? If so, we should have the familiar problem of a classification so broad as to be valueless—or worse: 'rococo' as a global term for the 18th century would create even more confusion than 'classicism' did for so long for the 17th, by ignoring the complexities of the period. And the arrangement of these or any similar

[6] see our review of Roger Laufer, *Style rococo, style des 'lumières'*, in *Studi francesi* (1963), xxi.511-514.

elements is surely almost never symmetrical in literature, so that this sort of so-called 'asymmetry' cannot be considered a distinguishing mark.

Point (c): 'dépouillement et clarté' are in no sense rococo characteristics but on the contrary absolutely typical of the almost diametrically opposed neo-classical style[7], which does not differ in this from 17th-century classicism, in which, as m. Saulnier says, we find the following principles: 'dépouillement, achèvement, discrétion, économie'. If these traits are to be found in the *Lettres persanes*, it is quite likely to be a neo-classical work. Some sobriety remained in the Régence use of the arabesque, but it disappeared in the rococo. Partly because of an apparent confusion of Régence with rococo, Roger Laufer claims rococo works are 'curved' (that is, indirect) in overall shape, crystal clear in details. This may be true of some literary works he has examined; it is not true of rococo plastic arts, where the curves are principally found in details, only secondarily in total form.

Point (d): the question of the alleged 'mise en question' brings us to a very important point—that of the dialectically-constructed social criticism. Rococo was originally a term of derision, and has always been used to mean *précieux, tarabiscoté, frivole*. It is astonishing to find it now used to mean morally responsible and critical: nothing could be more foreign to the rococo attitude to life. It may of course be affirmed that beneath the rococo form there (sometimes) lurked an anti-rococo content, but this clearly does not make purely rococo art; and furthermore, it would constitute an extreme case of the divorce between matter and form, a divorce so strongly contested by Roger Laufer himself. Rococo is sometimes positive, sometimes escapist, but never negative, sceptical, destructive.

[7] see our 'Rococo and Neo-classicism'. With regard to 18th-century modes of classicism, we propose to distinguish between works preserving from classicism both the letter and the spirit (post-classicism: *Manon Lescaut*), only the letter (pseudo-classicism: Voltaire's epic and theatre), or only the spirit (neo-classicism: Voltaire's novels). Of course, even 18th-century 'post-classicism' is not *identical* with 17th-century 'classicism'.

Point (a): It is true that rococo is typified by avoidance of deductive method; is this, however, true of the *Lettres*? We shall go into the question of structure later, but let us point out here that the remarks made by Montesquieu in his *Cahiers* do indicate a considerable consciousness of methodical structure that seems less rococo than neo-classical: 'Ce qui fait le mérite principal des *Lettres persanes*, c'est qu'on y trouve, sans y penser, une espèce de roman. On en voit le commencement, le progrès, la fin. Les divers personnages sont placés dans une chaîne qui les lie. A mesure qu'ils font un plus long séjour en Europe, les mœurs de cette partie du Monde prennent dans leur tête un air moins merveilleux et moins bizarre, et ils sont plus ou moins frappés de ce bizarre et de ce merveilleux suivant la différence de leurs caractères. D'un autre côté, le désordre croît dans le sérail d'Asie à proportion de la longueur de l'absence d'Usbek, c'est-à-dire à mesure que la fureur augmente et que l'amour diminue'[8]. In fact, he appears to condemn in literature the free movement typical of rococo art: 'Enfin, dans les romans ordinaires, les digressions ne peuvent être permises que lorsqu'elles forment elles-mêmes un nouveau roman. On n'y saurait mêler de raisonnements, parce qu'aucun des personnages n'y ayant été assemblé pour raisonner, cela choquerait le dessein et la nature de l'ouvrage' (*ibid.*).

However, he is not saying that digressions are inadmissible in the novel form, but rather making a distinction between the ordinary novel, where they are inadmissible, and the epistolary novel, where they are quite at home; for he continues: 'Mais dans la forme de lettres, où les acteurs ne sont pas choisis, mais forcés, et où tous les sujets qu'on traite ne sont dépendants d'aucun dessein ou d'aucun plan déjà formé, l'auteur s'est donné l'avantage de pouvoir joindre de la philosophie, de la politique et de la morale, à un roman, et de lier le tout par une chaîne secrète et, en quelque façon, inconnue' (*ibid.*). This is tantamount to suggesting

[8] Montesquieu, *Cahiers, 1716-1755*, éd. Bernard Grasset (Paris 1941), p.198.

that the only satisfactory literary form for the embodiment of rococo freedom of movement is the *roman épistolaire*. However, even his conception of this relatively free form is, or at least presents itself as strongly methodical and structural, as we have just seen.

M. Mercier's article deals with structure (pp.345-347), psychology (pp.348-350), and themes (pp.350-355), the latter two aspects being studied especially with a view to establishing their relevance to construction, as is seen in the conclusion (pp.355-356), which mainly concerns the rôle of these elements in the unified structure of the whole. We may take the conclusion to be summed up in the following quotations: 'C'est le jeu des correspondances entre les épisodes romanesques qui nous révèle les lignes saillantes de la pensée de Montesquieu' . . . 'Cette dialectique de la négation et de l'affirmation est à la base même de toute l'œuvre, puisque son objet est d'opposer l'Orient à l'Occident'. Thus Mercier, like Laufer, sees the structure of the *Lettres* as dialectic.

The most important of the four articles we are considering is that of Pauline Kra, who suggests that the principles of contrast and variety have been exaggerated by critics of this work[9]. Madame Kra states that her aim is 'to show that the sequence of letters is not fortuitous, but the product of careful arrangement'; she proposes 'to study the sequence of ideas as the basis for the arrangement'. She therefore tends to treat the work as a well-organised treatise in fictional form: 'beneath the variety which gives an impression of disorder, he achieved a basic order'. This is very convincingly demonstrated. But madame Kra, in devoting her attention almost solely to the ideas and their arrangement, accepts the traditional view that 'Montesquieu's concern with writing a coherent plot was subordinated to the expression of his

[9] she mentions in this connection E. P. Dargan, *The Æsthetic doctrine of Montesquieu* (Baltimore 1907), and Pierre Nardin, 'La Recette stylistique des *Lettres persanes*', *Le Français moderne* (1952-1953), xx-xxi.13-38, 101-109, 277-286.

social, political and philosophical ideas', and states categorically: 'The oriental plot ... does not determine the structure of the *Lettres persanes*'. We, on the other hand, propose to investigate the structure less as static arrangement than as dynamic, dramatic movement—that is (on the level of form if not of content), as fiction rather than treatise; this may provide a useful complement to madame Kra's important study.

John Falvey classes the *Lettres persanes* as a 'rationalist novel'—a genre with its own aesthetic of 'elegant style, functional order, and the exercise of the reason'. This would seem roughly to coincide with our conception of neo-classicism in the novel as conserving the spirit of classicism: clarity, simplicity, directness, elegance, critical sense of responsibility.

External indications. Two useful pieces of evidence by which to situate the art of a particular novel are the opinions of contemporaries and the author's opinion of them.

One contemporary opinion of the *Lettres persanes* is that expressed by Marivaux in *Le Spectateur français*:

Je ne puis m'empêcher de dire un mot d'un livre que je lisais ce matin, et qui est intitulé *Les Lettres persanes*, dont je n'ai encore lu que quelques-unes; et par celles-là, je juge que l'auteur est un homme de beaucoup d'esprit; mais entre les sujets hardis qu'il se choisit, et sur lesquels il me paraît le plus briller, le sujet qui réussit le mieux à l'ingénieuse vivacité de ses idées, c'est celui de la *Religion* et des choses qui ont rapport à elle. Je voudrais qu'un esprit aussi fin que le sien eût senti qu'il n'y a pas un si grand mérite à donner du *joli* et du *neuf* sur de pareilles matières, et que tout homme qui les traite avec quelque liberté peut se montrer spirituel à peu de frais; non que parmi les choses sur lesquelles il se donne un peu carrière, il n'y en ait d'excellentes en tous sens, et que même celles où il se joue le plus ne puissent recevoir une interprétation utile; car enfin, dans tout cela je ne vois qu'un homme d'esprit qui badine; mais qui ne songe pas assez qu'en se jouant, il engage quelquefois un peu trop la gravité respectable de ces matières: il faut là-dessus ménager l'esprit de l'homme qui tient

faiblement à ses devoirs et ne les croit presque plus nécessaires, dès qu'on les lui présente d'une façon peu sérieuse.

L'auteur, par exemple, blâme les lois de l'Europe, contre ceux qui se tuent eux-mêmes: il les appelle injustes et furieuses; et il veut qu'on laisse à l'homme le droit de sortir de la vie quand elle lui est à charge: il dit que cet homme, en se défaisant, ne fait que changer les modifications de sa matière, et rendre carrée une boule que les lois de la création avaient faite ronde.

De l'air décisif dont il parle, on croirait presque qu'il est entré de moitié dans le secret de cette même création, on croirait qu'il croit ce qu'il dit, pendant qu'il ne le dit que parce qu'il se plaît à produire une idée hardie[10].

Montesquieu made the following reply to such comments: 'On ne peut guère imputer aux *Lettres persanes* les choses que l'on a prétendu y choquer la Religion. Ces choses ne s'y trouvent jamais liées avec l'idée d'examen, mais avec l'idée d'extraordinaire. C'étoit un Persan qui parloit, et qui devoit être frappé de tout ce qu'il voyait et de tout ce qu'il entendoit. Dans ce cas, quand il parle de religion, il n'en doit pas paraître plus instruit que des autres choses, comme des usages et des manières de la Nation, qu'il ne regarde point comme bonnes ou mauvaises, mais comme merveilleuses. Comme il trouve bizarres nos coutumes, il trouve quelquefois de la singularité dans de certaines choses de nos dogmes, parce qu'il les ignore, et il les explique mal parce qu'il ne connaît rien de ce qui les lie et de la chaîne où ils tiennent.' (*Cahiers*, p.197.) This is obviously a case of a writer hiding behind his character, but that is perhaps more relevant to a judgment on Montesquieu than to a judgment on his novel. The defense of the novel is quite logical.

In the eyes of Marivaux, then, Montesquieu is a wit who desires to shock. Montesquieu himself, on the other hand, is not incapable of finding the same fault in others: 'Quelqu'un racontait tous les

[10] quoted by Gonzague Truc in the introduction to his edition of the *Lettres persanes* (Paris 1950), pp.xii-xiii.

vices de Voltaire. On répondait toujours: "Il a bien de l'esprit." Impatienté, quelqu'un dit: "Eh bien! c'est un vice de plus!" ' (p.87). He finds Voltaire lacking in maturity—'Ouvrages de Voltaire, comme ces visages mal proportionnés qui brillent de jeunesse' (p.86)—and in sincerity—'Voltaire n'écrira jamais une bonne histoire: il est comme les moines, qui n'écrivent pas pour le sujet qu'ils traitent, mais pour la gloire de leur ordre; Voltaire écrit pour son couvent' (p.86). At first glance, then, it would seem that Montesquieu should be placed somewhere between the seriousness of Marivaux and the barbed and irresponsible wit of Voltaire—if we can discount jealousy in these various criticisms.

Montesquieu also writes: 'Voltaire n'est pas beau; il n'est que joli' (p.86). It seems that he finds Voltaire lacking in the dignity, responsibility and masculinity that are notably lacking in the age they live in—the age of rococo: 'On me demandoit pourquoi on n'avait plus de goût pour les ouvrages de Corneille, Racine, etc. Je répondis: "C'est que toutes les choses pour lesquelles il faut de l'esprit sont devenues ridicules. Le mal est plus général. On ne peut plus souffrir aucune des choses qui ont un objet déterminé: les gens de guerre ne peuvent souffrir la guerre; les gens de cabinet, le cabinet; ainsi des autres choses. On ne connoît que les objets généraux, dans la pratique, cela se réduit à rien. C'est le commerce des femmes qui nous a menés là: car c'est leur caractère de n'être attachées à rien de fixe. Il n'y a plus qu'un sexe, et nous sommes tous femmes par l'esprit, et si, une nuit, nous changions de visage, on ne s'apercevrait pas que, du reste, il y eût de changement. Quoique les femmes eussent à passer dans tous les emplois que la Société donne, et que les hommes fussent privés de tous ceux que la Société peut ôter, aucun sexe ne seroit embarrassé' (pp.80-81). This feminising of all things is well depicted in 18th-century art: nowhere have men such feminine features as in the rococo portrait painting.

Montesquieu, then, found the rococo spirit uncongenial. He had likewise little taste for buildings in the gothic style, of which he said 'qu'il est une espèce d'énigme pour l'œil qui le voit; l'âme

est embarrassée comme quand on lui présente un poème obscur'[11]. The same attitude is evident towards the baroque: although Versailles is classical in its elements, it is not without considerable baroque pretentiousness in its proportions, as m. Tapié has pointed out, and Montesquieu criticizes this aspect of the château: 'Ce qui me déplaît dans Versailles, c'est une envie impuissante qu'on voit partout de faire de grandes choses. Je me ressouviens toujours de dona Olympia, qui disoit à Maldachini, qui faisait ce qu'il pouvait: "Animo! Maldachini. Io ti faro cardinale". Il me semble que le feu Roi disoit à Mansard: "Courage! Mansard: je te donnerai cent mille livres de rente". Lui, faisoit ses efforts: mettoit une aile; puis, une aile; puis, une autre. Mais, quand il en auroit mis jusques à Paris, il auroit toujours fait une petite chose' (*Cahiers*, pp.90-91).

We may say that Montesquieu admired proportion, sincerity, dignity, maturity, responsibility, manliness—and that he found such characteristics in the works of Corneille and Racine, whose declining popularity he deplores. He seems to tend basically towards classicism. On the other hand, he is not so slavishly classical as to be blind to the need for variety: 'La trop grande régularité, quelquefois et même souvent désagréable. Il n'y a rien de si beau que le Ciel; mais il est semé d'étoiles sans ordre. Les maisons et jardins d'autour de Paris n'ont que le défaut de se ressembler trop: ce sont des copies continuelles de Le Nôtre. Vous voyez toujours le même air, *qualem decet esse sororum*. Si on a eu un terrain bizarre, au lieu de l'employer tel qu'il est, on l'a rendu régulier, pour faire une maison qui fût comme les autres. Nos maisons sont comme nos caractères' (p.91). In his *Essai sur le goût* he notes: 'L'âme aime aussi les contrastes: le tour de phrase toujours le même et toujours uniforme déplaît extrêmement', and his corrections show a striving after variety[12]. In the *Cahiers*: 'Il ne faut pas que, dans un ouvrage, l'ironie soit continue: elle ne

[11] Maurice Rheims, *La Vie étrange des objets* (Paris 1959), p.182.

[12] Ch. Bruneau, *Petite histoire de la langue française* (Paris 1958), pp.254-255.

surprend plus' (p.71). Order, proportion, clarity, but saved from monotony by variety through the use of contrasts—this comes close to the neo-classical style.

All in all, this preliminary survey suggests that Montesquieu gave his sympathies to classicism, but in a flexible, intelligent way. Let us now look at the *Lettres persanes*, to see whether the novelist is faithful to the critic.

Style. The writers of the letters are twenty in number; the letters number 160. Of these, 76 are written by Usbek, 47 by Rica; four each by Rhedi, Zelis, and the head eunuch; three each by Zachi, Selim, and the chief black eunuch; two each by Ibben, Nargum, Narsit, and Roxane; and one each by Zephis, Rustan, Fatmé, Mirza, Jaron, Hagi Ibbi, Pharan, and the Mollak Méhémet-Hali. Of these missives, 47 are received by Usbek, 32 by Rhedi, 24 by Ibben, 21 by ***; five by Mirza, four each by Rustan and the head eunuch; three each by Nessir and the Mollak; two each by Rica and the harem women as a group; and one each by Hagi Ibbi, Jaron, Zachi, Roxane, Gemchid, Ben Josué, Pharan, Zelis, the Santon, Hassein, Nathanaël Lévi, Narsit, and Solim. Thus, if we can take *** to be always the same person, the recipients of the letters number twenty-four. The writers and recipients are the same except for Nargum and the chief black eunuch, who only appear as writers, and six others who only appear as recipients: ***, Gemchid, Ben Josué, the Santon, Hassein, and Nathanaël Lévi.

The five letters received by these last, Gemchid (XXXV), Ben Josué (XXXIX), the Santon (XCIII), Hassein (XCVII), and Nathanaël Lévi (CXLIII), are exclusively devoted to religious questions (with some philosophy), and together with the four letters that pass between Usbek and the Mollak (XVI, XVII, XVIII, CXXIII) they supply most of the oriental religious metaphor which flavours the whole collection. Furthermore, the letters to Hassein and Nathanaël Lévi clearly reflect a loss of religious credulity on the part of Usbek and Rica and are consequently almost devoid of orientalism, which only leaves the letters to and from the Mollak, Gemchid, Ben Josué, and the Santon, or a total of seven.

These are characterised by imagery based on light and darkness[13] and on height and depth[14] and by a vocabulary, partly metaphorical, drawn from the concern with purification[15]. This oriental style is also characterised by exaggeration, much of which, of course, employs the elements just mentioned[16], and it is full of oriental names, references, and appellations[17]. This is a literary counterpart to plastic and theatrical *turqueries, persanneries* (not to mention the 'arabesques') extremely typical of (although not exclusive to) the rococo period. Such elements, by their fantasy and their ornamental effect, approach the rococo, but they are distinguished from it here by their religious preoccupations and their dramatic flavour.

[13] XVI: étoiles, obscurcir, le Soleil, astre, obscur, l'aurore; XVII: éclairer, lumière; XVIII: lumières, ténèbres (three times), éclair, obscurité (twice); XXV: lumière, éclairer; XXXIX: éclatants, lumière; CXXIII: Soleil, s'obscurcit, éclairer.

[14] XVI: abîme, profond, Ciel, Terre, l'Abîme, l'Empyrée; XVIII: Terre, Ciel, Abîme, zénith, nadir; XXXIX: fond; XCIII: sommet, terre, nuées, précipité, abîmes.

[15] XVI: taches, purifié; XVII: immondes, purifier, laver, pures (twice), sales, souillure, lavent, impurs (twice), pureté, impureté; XVIII: pure, immonde (three times), ordures (three times), impureté; XXXIX: immonde; XCIII: pure, purifié.

[16] XVI: 'Tu te caches sans doute de peur d'obscurcir le Soleil ... Ta science est un abîme plus profond que l'Océan ... tu sais ce qui se passe dans les neuf chœurs des Puissances célestes; tu lis l'Alcoran sur la poitrine de notre divin prophète; et lorsque tu trouves quelque passage obscur, un Ange, par son ordre, déploie ses ailes rapides et descend du trône pour t'en révéler le secret ... n'es-tu pas le centre où le Ciel et la Terre aboutissent, et le point de communication entre l'Abîme et l'Empyrée?'; XVII: 'Viens m'éclairer, source de lumière; foudroie avec ta plume divine les difficultés que je vais te proposer'; XVIII: 'vos lumières ressemblent aux ténèbres de l'Abîme . . . le zénith de votre esprit ne va pas au nadir de celui du moindre des immaums'; XXXIX: 'La Terre trembla trois fois, comme si elle eût enfanté elle-même; toutes les idoles se prosternèrent; les trônes des rois furent renversées'; XCIII: 'tes austérités étonnent le ciel même; les anges t'ont regardé du sommet de la gloire et ont dit: "Comment est-il encore sur la terre, puisque son esprit est avec nous et vole autour du trône qui est soutenue par les nuées?" '

[17] 'Zufagar, cette épée d'Hali qui avait deux pointes', 'l'Alcoran', 'treizième Iman', 'divin Mollak', 'sublime réponse', 'lettres sacrées', 'sublime Dervis', 'sacré Santon', 'sacrés immaums', 'moufti', 'grand vizir', 'les enfants du Prophète que le détestable Omar a dévoyés'.

This oriental style contains some of the most effective imagery in the work, and in particular the fluctuating attitude in eastern society between assumptions of elaborate self-abasement (XVI) and arrogant pride (XXI) inspires images based on 'pied': 'Les raisonnements de votre esprit sont comme la poussière que vos pieds font élever lorsque le Soleil est dans son midi dans le mois ardent de Chalaban' (XVIII); 'Je regarde les vestiges de tes pieds comme la prunelle de mes yeux' (XCIII). A third image of the same type—'Je regarderai votre vie comme celle des insectes que je trouve sous mes pieds' (XXI)—takes us away from these religious letters to those written to and from the harem; and at this point we should, perhaps, before proceeding, take a more general look at the style of the *Lettres*.

First of all, the style is quite varied. We find variations from writer to writer (Usbek is solemn, Rica gay), and since nearly half the letters (76 out of 160) are written by Usbek, it is the latter's style which might be expected to dominate the work. However, variations from writer to writer are much less important than those, even within the one writer, from subject to subject (which also means, usually, from receiver to receiver). Usbek, who, as we have seen, is flowery and obsequious with men of religion (though less and less so), is grandiloquent and overbearing with his eunuchs and wives, serious but simple with his friends.

Just as his letters to and from men of religion tended to be flowery, his letters both to and from the inmates of the harem are in the one style. This harem style has the orientalism of the religious letters, but in a much milder form. Images (II: 'Tu es le fléau du vice et la colonne de la fidélité') are less extravagant and less frequent; the exaggeration, of which there is still a good deal, is obtained by more familiar means: a lavish use of melodramatic verbs, nouns, and adjectives[18]. This is none other than the style

[18] to restrict ourselves to the first half-dozen harem letters, we find the following verbs—désespérer (twice), dévorer, gémis, désoler, haïs, tourmenter; nouns—néant, monstre, larmes (three times), fureur, désespoir (twice), chagrins (twice), inquiétudes, malheurs, trouble, ennuis, morts,

of the *précieux*, and this is confirmed when we look up from the vocabulary to the phrasing[19].

The seven religious letters plus the thirty-six harem letters total 43. Even if we add the three letters to Nessir, which are substantially marked by the harem style, and the two letters to Hassein and Nathanaël Lévi, which are not *entirely* devoid of elements from the religious style, we still only arrive at a total of 48, leaving a balance of 112 letters.

Of these, 56 are written by Usbek, 46 by Rhedi, 2 each by Ibben and Nargum, and one each by Rustan and Mirza. In these letters, there are some oriental and some *précieux* elements (Aphéridon in letter LXVII is in this respect as well as others a precursor of Des Grieux), but mostly the vocabulary and phraseology are simple, without any really important variation from one correspondent to another. It is true that the sober manner of Usbek and his friends contrasts with that of the gay and lively Rica (XXV, XLVIII), whose prose style has a witty, informal flavour and betrays a taste for incongruity and paradox (XXIV, XXVIII): he says himself 'j'ai pris le goût de ce pays-ci, où l'on aime à soutenir des opinions extraordinaires et à réduire tout en paradoxe' (XXXVIII). But all these letters, whoever the writer, have a neo-classical simplicity and clarity of expression that varies on the whole but little.

In spite of the difference between the oriental (religious), the *précieux* (harem), and the neo-classical (simple) styles, there are characteristics shared by all of these in the *Lettres persanes*, and which may therefore be considered as typical of 'the' style of the work.

One is the placing of extremely short principal clauses independently one next to the other, with subordination eliminated or

mépris, tourments, haine, humiliation, torrent; and abjectives—fatales, précieux, entière, infatigables, vils, cruel (twice), extravagants, tendres, accablés, affreux, misérable, dévoré, sévères, transporté, redoutable, mille (twice), infini, terribles, humiliants; many of the latter are often preceded by *plus* and *si*.

[19] (II): 'ce dépôt précieux de mon cœur'; VII: 'ce cher objet de mon amour'; etc.

reduced to an absolute minimum. We find this in the oriental or religious style [20], in the *précieux* or harem style [21], and finally in the neo-classical or simple style [22].

Another characteristic, and perhaps the most significant of all, is the use of antithesis. Again we find this in the oriental (religious) style [23]; it is more frequent in the *précieux* (harem) style[24]; and frequent also in the simple neo-classical style[25].

[20] XVI: 'Je suis au milieu d'un peuple profane. Permets que je me purifie avec toi; souffre que je tourne mon visage vers les lieux sacrés que tu habites; distingue-moi des méchants, comme on distingue au lever de l'aurore le filet blanc d'avec le filet noir; aide-moi de tes conseils; prends soin de mon âme; enivre-la de l'esprit des Prophètes; nourris-la de la science du Paradis, et permets que je mette ses plaies à tes pieds'. (Usbek.)

[21] III: 'Nous te vîmes longtemps errer d'enchantements en enchantements; ton âme incertaine demeura longtemps sans se fixer; chaque grâce nouvelle te demandait un tribut; nous fûmes en un moment toutes couvertes de tes baisers; tu portas tes curieux regards dans les lieux les plus secrets; tu nous fis passer en un instant dans mille situations différentes; toujours de nouveaux commandements et une obéissance toujours nouvelle'. (Zachi')

[22] XXVIII: 'Ils sont obligés d'être partout: ils passent par des endroits qu'eux seuls connaissent, montent avec une adresse surprenante d'étage en étage; ils sont en haut, en bas, dans toutes les loges; ils plongent, pour ainsi dire; on les perd, ils reparaissent; souvent ils quittent le lieu de la scène et vont jouer dans une autre'. (Rica.)

[23] XVIII: 'Malheureux, qui toujours embarrassés des choses de la Terre, n'avez jamais regardé d'un œil fixe celles du Ciel, et qui révérez la condition des mollaks, sans oser ni l'embrasser ni la suivre! Profanes, qui n'entrez jamais dans les secrets de l'Eternel, vos lumières ressemblent aux ténèbres de l'Abîme, et les raisonnements de votre esprit sont comme la poussière que vos pieds font élever lorsque le Soleil est dans son midi, dans le mois ardent de Chalaban. Aussi le zénith de votre esprit ne va pas au nadir de celui du moindre des Immaums'. (Méhémet-Hali.)

[24] II: 'Tu es le fléau du vice et la colonne de la fidélité. Tu leur commandes, et tu leur obéis; tu exécutes aveuglément toutes leurs volontés et leur fais exécuter de même les lois du sérail. Tu trouves de la gloire à leur rendre les services les plus vils; tu te soumets avec respect et avec crainte à leurs ordres légitimes; tu les sers comme l'esclave de leurs esclaves. Mais, par un retour d'empire, tu commandes en maître comme moi-même, quant tu crains le relâchement des lois de la pudeur et de la modestie'. (Usbek.)

[25] XXXVII: 'Il a un ministre qui n'a que dix-huit ans, et une maîtresse qui en a quatre-vingts; il aime sa religion, et il ne peut souffrir ceux qui disent qu'il la faut observer à la rigueur; quoiqu'il fuie le tumulte des villes, et qu'il se communique peu, il n'est occupé, depuis le matin jusques au

We may conclude, then, that while such elements of the orientalism as may have a purely ornamental function may be considered rococo, the style is on the whole marked by simplicity, clarity, a generally abstract vocabulary, and the brevity, concision, and analysis of the *style coupé*, with its suppression of subordination and even of transitions, its taste for antithesis. These, as we have shown elsewhere, are the taste of neo-classicism.

Montesquieu has stated his own view of his position in the development of the epistolary style: 'autrefois le style épistolaire étoit entre les mains des pédants, qui écrivoient en latin. Balzac prit le style épistolaire et la manière d'écrire de ces gens-là. Voiture en dégoûta, et, comme il avoit l'esprit fin, il y mit de la finesse et une certaine affectation, avec plus de connoissances et de lumières, et plus de philosophie. On ne connoissoit point encore Madame de Sévigné. Mes *Lettres persanes* apprirent à faire des romans en lettres' (*Cahiers*, p.84).

Montesquieu admires the majesty of the baroque periodic style: 'La belle prose est comme un fleuve majestueux qui roule ses eaux' (p.70), but, as we have seen from his comments on Versailles, he is critical of baroque bombast and pretentiousness: 'Le style enflé et emphatique est si bien le plus aisé que, si vous voyez une nation sortir de la barbarie, comme par exemple, les Portugais, d'abord vous verrez que leur style donnera dans le sublime, et ensuite ils descendront au naïf' (p.71). In the *Lettres*, he ridicules the figurative, metaphorical style through both Rica (LXXIII) and Usbek (XCVII), as well as having Usbek deride the excessively subtle language ('langue barbare') of the Irish theologians (XXXVI). It is this taste for moderation which leads him to prefer

soir, qu'à faire parler de lui; il aime les trophées et les victoires, mais il craint autant de voir un bon général à la tête de ses troupes, qu'il aurait sujet de le craindre à la tête d'un armée ennemie. Il n'est, je crois, jamais arrivé qu'à lui d'être, en même temps, comblé de plus de richesses qu'un prince n'en saurait espérer, et accablé d'une pauvreté qu'un particulier ne pourrait soutenir. Il aime à gratifier ceux qui le servent; mais il paye aussi libéralement les assiduités ou plutôt l'oisiveté de ses courtisans, que les campagnes laborieuses de ses capitaines'. (Usbek.)

the neo-classical *style coupé*: 'Pour bien écrire, il faut sauter les idées intermédiaires, assez pour n'être pas ennuyeux; pas trop, de peur de n'être pas entendu'[26].

A single line of development seems to run from the lively French *style narratif* of the 16th century through the simple classical form of the 17th (Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère), to the neo-classical *style coupé* of the 18th (Le Sage, Montesquieu, Voltaire). Parallel with this would be the complex latinate *style savant* of the 16th from which developed the organic baroque period of the 17th (Balzac, Bossuet) and ultimately some aspects of Prévost (and of Buffon)[27]. A third parallel current, deriving principally from baroque sublimity, is the extravagant *précieux* style of the 17th century (Voiture, Urfé, La Motte-Houdart), from which Marivaux's rococo style partly derived—not, however, without some possible classical influence.

It has been said that a continuous line may be drawn from La Rochefoucauld, 'qui exprime une philosophie désenchantée en maximes longuement ciselées, d'une concision expressive, frappées comme des médailles'[28], through La Bruyère—'son style très travaillé et un peu artificiel, aux procédés et aux tours variés, qui abuse volontiers de l'antithèse et de l'ironie, annonce déjà le XVIIIe siècle' (p.485)—to Montesquieu himself; Montesquieu 'reprend la tradition, qu'il adapte au goût du jour. La vie de salon avait fait préférer la phrase courte et pleine de pensée, ramassée sur elle-même, plaisante, spirituelle, voire ironique, volontiers affilée, le style dépouillé d'images. Les *Lettres persanes* sont le

[26] *Cahiers*, 171. 'La phrase des *Lettres persanes* est généralement brève; Montesquieu aime à intercaler entre le verbe et le nom sujet un complément qui sépare une proposition en deux groupes isolés. L'accumulation de ces membres détachés, tantôt isolés par des silences, tantôt par des pauses (qui impliquent un changement de mouvement et un changement d'intonation), est capable, combiné avec un système d'oppositions, par exemple, de produire le plus grand effet' (Bruneau, pp.254-255).

[27] D. Mornet, *Histoire de la clarté française* (Paris 1929), p.296.

[28] Albert Dauzat, *Histoire de la langue française* (Paris 1930), pp. 484-486.

triomphe du genre; plus austères, les autres ouvrages de l'auteur accusent les mêmes tendances mais avec moins de brillant et plus de fermeté' (p.486). On the other hand, the various types of classicism are predominantly conservative, and it is no surprise to find Voltaire, the master of the neo-classical *style coupé* favoured by Montesquieu, taking a reactionary stand with regard to vocabulary. We see, in the case of Montesquieu, a much more flexible attitude: 'C'est une mauvaise maxime que de faire des dictionnaires des langues vivantes; cela les borne trop. Tous les mots qui n'y sont pas sont censés impropres, étrangers ou hors d'usage. C'est l'Académie même qui a produit les *satires néologiques* ou en a été la cause' (*Cahiers*, p.69).

We may conclude that the style of the author of the *Lettres persanes* is neo-classical but not rigidly so.

Structure. The external structure is provided by the letter form. The result is highly analytical: firstly, because of the large number of the letters as compared with the four parts of *La Princesse de Clèves*, the two of *Manon Lescaut*, and the eleven of *La Vie de Marianne*, or even the thirty chapters of *Candide* (as against the 160 *Lettres persanes*); and secondly, because of their brevity, the average length, from the eight pages of letter LXVII to the eight lines of letter XLII, being 1 2/3 pages (Garnier edition). Furthermore, this division is more significant than the division into chapters or parts, because of the changing subject, an effect which is increased by the rapidity of the movement from one brief letter to the next, as a new letter usually, though not always, means a new subject.

The *dénouement* of the work as a whole is provided by the final series of fifteen harem letters, and the internal structure consists of the elements that prepare this crisis in the harem. The harem plot falls naturally into five parts, consisting respectively of the preparation of the first crisis (to XXII), and then of the second crisis (to LXV), the weakening of communications (to XCVI), the silence before the storm (to CXLV), and the final outbreak (to the end).

Without a perception of the stages of the internal structure, it is well-nigh impossible for us to appreciate fully the structural (as distinct from the thematic) function of such apparently extraneous and irrelevant elements as the letters mentioning how Soliman's daughter is married and then rejected (LXX)[29] and the purchase of new slaves (LXXIX, XCVI): all of these letters belong to part three, and they constitute a series of forlorn attempts to remind Usbek that he has a harem, with wives, daughters, and new slaves, waiting for his return,—attempts to persuade him to come back. His growing disinterest is reflected in the fact that he answers only the first of these three letters, in spite of their increasingly urgent appeals to him.

The harem novel is, however, only one (if the most graphic) of the illustrations of the central movement of the work—the progress towards independence of mind. This independence is gradually achieved both by the harem women, whose three leaders are Zachi, Zelis, and Roxane, and by the three travellers, Usbek, Rica, and Rhedi. What the women achieve and put into practice, the men grope for tentatively on the level of speculation and of empirical observation. Both trios seek to free themselves from the attitudes ingrained by an oriental harem upbringing, and the reproach 'entêté comme vous êtes des préjugés de l'Orient' (XLVIII) and the admonition 'enfin, défaites-vous de vos préjugés' (XXXIV) are made to the men by their European experiences, to the women by the unaccustomed stresses developed by their abandonment. It is important, however, to remember that both Usbek and Roxane had a natural tendency to independent thinking before the start of the fatal journey, as is evident from Usbek's account of his conduct at the Persian court (VIII) and the questions he addresses to the Mollak before he leaves the East (XVII), and from Roxane's behaviour after her wedding

[29] not, as Roger Mercier (p.347) says, 'le mariage de Soliman et l'affront qu'il fait à sa femme'.

(XXVI) and her declarations in the very last letter: 'Mon esprit s'est toujours tenu dans l'indépendance' (CLX).

The main criticism that may be levelled at the *Lettres persanes* as a novel concerns the question of structural relevance.

Let us first note that appearances can be deceptive: the greatest appearance of irrelevance is to be found in such an element as the letter from Hagi Ibbi to Ben Josué (XXXIX), neither the writer nor the recipient appearing or even being mentioned anywhere else in the *Lettres*, yet this letter is relevant and important not only thematically but developmentally, since, by showing us the Mahometan beliefs that necessarily form the background to the reactions and reflections of the travellers, it enables us to grasp the point from which they set out, and thus to appreciate just how far they travel towards independent judgment.

Montesquieu declares in his *Cahiers*: 'Ceux qui font des digressions croyent être comme des hommes qui ont de grands bras, et qui atteignent plus loin' (p.74). But a little further on he writes: 'Je vois des gens qui s'effarouchent à la moindre digression, et moi, je crois que ceux qui savent en faire sont comme les hommes qui ont de grands bras, et qui atteignent plus loin' (p.74). There seems to be some hesitation here in his position—probably caused by his self-consciousness about what he calls 'digressions' included in the *Lettres persanes* and by his not being sure of winning acceptance for his argument that 'digressions', while not acceptable 'dans les romans ordinaires', are quite natural and therefore justified in 'la forme de lettres'.

It is true that to create correspondents restricting themselves only to significant elements would be to break the laws of the epistolary novel—it would involve giving such characters the power, even at the time of writing, to see into the future, where the total pattern stands revealed and determines which, of all these elements, were significant after all. On the other hand, it would have been reasonable to expect Montesquieu, as presenter, to make a choice among the elements supposedly left at his disposal by his Persian friends. Furthermore, the material

irrelevant to the advancement of the central movement is not restricted to so-called digressions made by the writers. A digression in the sense of an uncontrolled wandering from one subject to another can almost never be found *within* one of the *Lettres*. What we do find is that very little of the whole work contributes to the development of the central movement, most of the material being built up by illustration after illustration, on the levels of speculation, observation, and action, of a small number of themes: the main principles of structure are not developmental but thematic[30].

The unity of the thematic structure is based on a complex system of echoes, parallels, and antitheses. Echoes affect minor themes (the folly of seeing any intrinsic value in gold: XLV, CV, CXVIII, CXLII), major concept (the 'question de savoir si la Loi naturelle soumet les femmes aux hommes', XXXVIII, is echoed in Roxane's declaration 'J'ai toujours été libre: J'ai réformé tes lois sur celles de la Nature', CLX), and total framework (Montesquieu's having Rica write Usbek a letter about a woman for whom he translated a Persian story about Zulim who tells an Arabian story about Ibrahim and Anaïs (CXLI) provides a variation in little on the theme of the harem tragedy—a type of 'structure en abyme'). The central theme of independent thinking in the harem story, brought into focus by the letter about the education of the daughters in the harem (LXII), is echoed in the stories of Astarté (LXVII) and the Hindu widow (CXXV), which illustrate it in a similar way[31], with women throwing off the attitudes ingrained into them by their upbringing; and it is paralleled by the movement of the travellers also towards independence of mind. The antitheses established by Montesquieu between his illustrative

[30] see Pauline Kra's fundamental study.

[31] not by antithesis, as is suggested by Mercier; the Hindu woman cannot be said 'avoir traversé des épreuves' like Astarté—the episode has much too flippant a tone to support Mercier's interpretation: '—Que dites-vous? dit la femme surprise. Je retrouverai mon mari? Ah! je ne me brûle pas. Il était jaloux, chagrin et, d'ailleurs, si vieux que, si le Dieu Brama n'a point fait sur lui quelque réforme, sûrement il n'a pas besoin de moi, etc.' (CXXV).

elements are many and varied: between the bad earlier Troglodytes (XI) and the good later Troglodytes (XII-XIV), between Persian modesty and French 'impudence' (XXVI), between Persian gravity and French gaiety (XXXIV, XLVIII), between marriage and divorce in East (LXX) and West (LXXXVI), between the systems of punishment in Europe and Asia and their effectiveness (LXXX), between harsh and mild government (CII-CIV), between Ibrahim's wives before and after the celestial messenger's intervention (CXLI). Sometimes there is even a contrast between one contrast and another: between Christian religious intolerance and Mahometan intolerance (LX), between two views of Christian freedom contrasted with Mahometan taboos (XXXIII, LVI). It can be seen that most of these antitheses are aspects of the opposition drawn between East and West.

While a structure dependent on layer upon layer of thematic illustration may be considered in this respect to bear some analogy to rococo decoration, the most essential traits of the structure of the *Lettres persanes* are discontinuity, analysis, and antithesis, which are precisely not rococo but neo-classical characteristics[32].

Characterisation. The psychological material is presented in several ways—by a writer's comments (about a third person, about the recipient, about him—or herself), by his or her manner, by the pattern of correspondence.

Rica's vivacity and ebullience are revealed by third-person commentary (XXV, XXVII, XLVIII); his taste for malicious fun is revealed by self-commentary (LII). Correspondence-pattern reveals that, in contrast with Rhedi, he writes a lot more letters than he receives.

[32] the stages of the dynamic progression of the harem novel correspond to some extent with the groupings of the ideas pointed out by Pauline Kra. In both cases, divisions are seen at letter XCVII and letter CXLVI. During the first three parts, that is up to letter XCVII, the ideas centre on three main questions: the individual (I-XL), man and his social environment (XLI-LXVII), the citizen and the state (LXVIII-XCVII). During the calm before the storm, we have letters about the nation (XCVIII-CXXII) and intellects and administrators (CXXIII-CXLVI).

It is again the pattern of correspondence which reveals that, apart from letter II to the Premier Eunuque and letter XXVI to Roxane, Usbek never writes to the inmates of the harem except in reply to a letter (XLIII, LXV, LXXI, CXLVII) or a warning (XX)—and he leaves several letters from the harem unanswered (III, IV, VII, XLVII, LIII, LXII, LXXIX, XCVI). Writing-manner reveals his apparent (but lessening) reverence for religion (XVI, etc.); his harshness, inhumanity, and reliance on fear in his dealings with the eunuchs (XXI); his affection for his friends (XXV). The latter is confirmed by recipient-comment (LXVII). Self-commentary reveals that Usbek's concern for his wives is based not on love but entirely on jealousy (VI); that he tends to be solemn and self-righteous (VIII) but is capable of laughing at himself (LXIX) and of appreciating in others qualities he knows to be lacking in himself (XXV, XXVII, XLVIII); that he left Persia and 'abandoned' his wives not out of choice but to preserve his life (VIII), that he suffers from homesickness (VI, XXVII) and would have returned to Persia earlier but for Rica's obstinacy (CLIV).

Correspondence-pattern reveals Usbek's preference for Roxane (she is the only wife to whom he writes an unsolicited letter, XXVI) and her indifference (she doesn't bother to answer it). Recipient-commentary reveals Roxane's independence (XXVI), writing-manner reveals her fierce pride and determination (CLV), third-person commentary reveals her 'treachery' (CLVIII), and self-commentary reveals the violence of her hatred and the depth and duration of her deception (CLX).

Montesquieu devotes several letters to a study of the eunuch's state, psychological and otherwise—II, IX, XV, XXXIV, XLI-XLIII, LIII, LXIV. When a slave becomes a eunuch, he experiences a double *déracinement*: sexual (downwards) and social (upwards). His condition is essentially one of tragic frustration, creating an emotional turmoil that is both portrayed directly and revealed in the emotional manner of writing: 'las de servir dans les emplois les plus pénibles, je comptai sacrifier mes passions à mon repos et à ma fortune. Malheureux que j'étais! Mon esprit me faisait voir

le dédommagement, et non pas la perte: j'espérais que je serais délivré des atteintes de l'amour par l'impuissance de le satisfaire. Hélas! on éteignit en moi l'effet des passions, sans en éteindre la cause, et, bien loin d'en être soulagé, je me trouvai environné d'objets qui les irritaient sans cesse' (IX).

The eunuch, being unable to obtain obedience (which he must obtain), or even prove his own existence in the scheme of things, by inspiring love (which he can't inspire), makes every effort to achieve these ends by inspiring fear, which is naturally accompanied by hatred but at least gives him the satisfaction of suppressing the indifference that would reduce him to nothingness. This is why the first eunuch writes: 'Je me charge volontiers de la haine de toutes ces femmes, qui m'affermit dans le poste où je suis' (IX), and a number of letters refer to the eunuch's brutality (IV, CLV, CLVI, CLVII). While these creatures are men who have lost their masculinity (like the men of the rococo period, according to Montesquieu), their condition is hardly brought closer to that of woman, and the tragedy of their situation hardly makes them a subject of rococo psychology, essentially light and subtle, as seen in such works of Marivaux as his *Vie de Marianne* and his theatre, or in novels of Crébillon or Duclos.

The harem women, like the eunuchs, naturally employ emotional language reflecting frustration. There are, however, distinctions between them that are more important than the distinction between the faithful Solim and the deceitful or stupid Narsit. Whereas Roxane ignores Usbek's letter, the other women's letters are ignored by Usbek. Among these, Fatmé is dominated by physical passion (VII), Zachi is vain about her depth of feeling (III) but above all clings to the love of Usbek (III, CLVI), even though she is the first to break the rules of the harem (XX). Zephis-Zélis[33], more cool and frank, has a more bourgeois mentality (LII, LXII, LXX); her feelings depend on her self-respect (LV) and her respect for Usbek (CLVII). The psychological study

[33] see Mercier, p.346, note 2.

of the harem women is above all marked by the tragedy of their situation.

French women, on the other hand, are 'plus jolies, . . . plus gaies et plus enjouées' (XXXIV), and the French claim that 'un peu de coquetterie est un sel qui pique et prévient la corruption' (XXXVIII). If there is a rococo aspect of the psychology of the *Lettres*, it must be found in such letters as XXXVIII, LV, LXIII, LXXXII, CX, dealing with French women and their relationships with and influence on men. Letter LXIII mentions the widespread influence of badinage, typical of the rococo period; LXXXII in particular is worth quoting: Rica says that 'ceux qui savent parler sans rien dire, et qui amusent une conversation . . . sont adorés des femmes; mais ils ne le sont pas tant que d'autres, qui ont reçu de la Nature l'aimable talent de sourire à propos, c'est-à-dire à chaque instant, et qui portent la grâce d'une joyeuse approbation sur tout ce qu'elles disent. Mais ils sont au comble de l'esprit lorsqu'ils savent entendre finesse à tout et trouver mille petits traits ingénieux dans les choses les plus communes. J'en connais d'autres, qui se sont bien trouvés d'introduire dans les conversations les choses inanimées et d'y faire parler leur habit brodé, leur perruque blonde, leur tabatière, leur canne et leurs gants'.

The psychology is developmental in some respects—Usbek becomes less flowery and more philosophical with men of religion (compare XVI with XCVII), less critical and more appreciative of the effects of European women's freedom (compare XXVI with XLVIII)—but such development is not systematic and continuous but uneven and fragmentary. This, of course, makes it more credible.

There are indications of irony on the part of Montesquieu at the expense of his characters, as when Rica derisively remarks: 'Celui qui doute de tout comme philosophe n'ose rien nier comme théologien' (LXVI): the same criticism may be levelled at him and Usbek when they cautiously add to their letters reassuring paragraphs protesting religious orthodoxy (CVI), usually tacking these on at the end (XXXVIII, XCVII, CIII) after they have expressed

other less conventional opinions. A more fundamental and serious case of such structural (that is non-verbal) irony is that involving the psychology of Usbek, whose humanity and reality as a character owe so much to his inner contradictions, and in particular to his being unable or unwilling to apply to himself personally the general conclusions he comes to after observation and reflection. Roger Laufer sums this up most eloquently: 'Dans un monde régi par des lois naturelles, il parviendrait soit à une conscience déchirante s'il se découvrait incapable de le transformer, soit à une praxis révolutionnaire (en supprimant son propre sérail, par exemple). Mais le livre s'arrête brusquement. Montesquieu n'a pas osé, ou pu, tirer la leçon de son expérience. Usbek se tait. Usbek n'a probablement pas compris' (Laufer, pp.202-203).

Point of view. With regard to point of view, the work has the *je* form common to other novels of the period, including *Manon Lescaut* and *La Vie de Marianne*, but varies the *je* not by filtering and time-change but by the separation into various authors of letters, another form common in the 18th century, from the *Lettres persanes* to the *Liaisons dangereuses.*

The travellers' view-points are limited to that of Usbek in part one, expanded to three (Usbek, Rica, Rhedi) in part two, reduced to two (Usbek and Rica) in part three, expanded again to three (Usbek, Rica, Rhedi) in part four, and reduced again to Usbek alone in part five. Rhedi's contribution is small, being limited to a total of four letters.

Five inmates of the harem write letters in part one, four in part two, only three in part three, and none in part four; six of them write in part five. Three others write in part one, two in part two, and two in part three; then no more. These, except for Hagi Ibbi, are Usbek's friends.

As these figures indicate, the total number of correspondents, which means the total number of points of view, diminishes from nine in parts one and two to seven in part three and three in part four, with a return to seven in the brief part five. The three in part four are Usbek, Rica, and Rhedi, the last being unimportant, so

that we find Usbek and Rica absolutely dominating the stage from shortly after the middle of the *Lettres persanes*. Even the variation from one to the other of these two tends to lapse: we find Usbek writing eleven out of twelve in one group of letters (LXXXVIII-XCIX) and thirteen out of fourteen in another group (CXI-CXXIV), and Rica writing eighteen out of twenty (CXXV-CXLIV). This seems to indicate Montesquieu's gradual loss of interest in the fictional form he is using, the epistolary novel, and his growing tendency towards the philosophical dissertation, present from the beginning in the Troglodyte series but growing much more prominent in such a series as that on depopulation—and soon to replace fiction completely as Montesquieu's chief means of expression[34].

Subject. At first glance, the subject appears to be a long journey and its effects on the travellers and those they have left behind. But this does not seem to agree with the passage of Montesquieu's *Cahiers* (p.70) where he declares it a waste of time to spend one's talent on a poor subject or a trivial one: 'Il faut toujours prendre un bon sujet: l'esprit que vous mettez dans un mauvais sujet est comme l'or que vous mettriez sur l'habit d'un mendiant; au lieu qu'un bon sujet semble nous élever sur ses ailes.' It seems probable, then, that in Montesquieu's eyes the subject of the *Lettres* is either more particular (a long journey *made by a Persian who leaves behind him a harem* and its effects on the travellers and on the abandoned inmates of the harem) or stresses the section regarding 'its effects on the travellers'. The journey, in any case, has the vital importance of being the fundamental causal situation of the human tragedy, of the philosophical reflections of Usbek and his adoption of a 'double-truth' standard, and of the comments on French life and institutions. In the rococo aesthetic, on the other

[34] the introduction of Roxane's point of view, while very important, is delayed to an extraordinarily late stage. Even the playwrights, while favouring this technique of delayed entry (as Mercier points out, p.346), must rarely have taken it as far as Montesquieu, who does not introduce Roxane until more than half-way through the fifth 'act'.

hand, the subject was not so important: Watteau was accepted into the Academy as the master of the *fête galante*, and Marivaux deals mostly with love (most often *amour-goût*) and marriage.

Themes. The main themes are freedom, virtue, happiness; marital fidelity, love, friendship, pleasure; passion, violence, suicide; and, perhaps above all, the relativity of customs. Some of these, of their very nature, stand outside the rococo aesthetic—virtue, marital fidelity, jealousy, passion, violence, suicide. Others stand outside it by virtue of their serious, didactic treatment, as for instance in the case of the themes of pleasure and freedom. A striking characteristic is the frequent occurrence of such minor themes as that of the folly of attaching too much importance to gold (XLV, CV, CXVIII); the explanation for this resides not in its relevance to the main themes or plots but simply in its being a personal preoccupation of the author.

Meaning and philosophy. The most fundamental meaning of the work resides in the levelling of criticism of various types—political, social, moral—, an intention carried out by means of a complex system of contrasts. In other words, the work is largely didactic, whereas, in spite of Marivaux's implied criticism of the conventions imposed on women by society, overt criticism or moralising of almost any kind is foreign to the rococo aesthetic, which with its terror of boredom (inspired by the self-important pomp and seriousness of Louis XIV baroque classicism) is resolutely informal, very often gay, and even frivolous.

The philosophy underlying the whole is based on the intimate interdependence between freedom (individual, political, metaphysical), virtue, and happiness. A system in which freedom is important only to give moral value to virtuous conduct, and in which happiness depends not on sensual pleasure but on this virtue, has nothing to do with the gay and pleasure-loving world of the rococo.

Setting. The time setting starts with the 21st January 1711 (letter III) and ends with the 11th September 1720 (letter CXLV), thus covering a period of some ten years divided in the middle by

the death of Louis XIV and the establishment of the *régence* (XCII), a period of pleasure—theatre (XXVIII), gambling (LVI), and moral dissipation (XXXVIII, XLVIII, LV). The fact that the First Eunuch's letter XCVI dates from 1716 and his letter CXLVI dates from 1717 shows that the chronology of the last fifteen letters is at odds with their arrangement in the collection. In fact, the final catastrophe has four parts—CXLVI (1717), CXLVII-CXLIX (1718), LC-CLIV (1719), and CLV-CLX (1720)—spread chronologically over the last 63 letters of the collection[35]. The chronology of the letters shows Usbek silent towards the harem from 1714 (LXXI) to 1718 (CXLVII), which locates the end of his indifference earlier than does the serial order of the letters. However, in so far as the collection of letters constitutes a work of art with parts cleverly disposed in a satisfying and dramatic pattern imposed on them by Montesquieu, the chronological order is not that which produces the aesthetic effect on the reader, for whom, on the contrary, because of the order in which he reads the letters, the work ends in a fifteen-letter cataclysm prepared by an ominous silence lasting for forty-nine letters.

The place-setting is basically twofold: Europe (Paris, Venice, Leghorn, Moscow) and Asia Minor (Ispahan, Com, Smyrna, Tauris, Erzeron, Casbin, Jaron). Europe is absent from part one (I-XXII), when the travellers have not yet left the East, as the harem is absent from part four (XCVII-CXLV). Except for a few elements, such as description of an excursion from the harem (XLVII), only the European setting is dealt with in a concrete manner—which is not particularly surprising. The setting of the *Lettres* has quite exceptional importance in that, in providing material for observation and reflection, it influences the psychology of the travellers and in so doing advance their progress towards independence of their oriental attitudes and prejudices.

[35] Pauline Kra points out that 'if the chronological order had been preserved, the influence of the eunuchs, the reign of terror and the rebellion would reflect political situations discussed in what would be adjacent letters' (p.51, note 45).

The action is set in the upper classes, both in Persia and in France. Such a setting does not, of course, exclude the under-privileged, for some of these owe their very existence *qua tales* (and sometimes precisely through their loss of privilege or indeed ordinary human rights—the harem women, the eunuchs) to some privilege that contributes vitally to the superior condition of these upper classes; and as a result of this the oriental part, as distinct from the occidental, is mainly preoccupied with the under-privileged, within the upper-class framework. Both the harem women and the eunuchs suffer a form of *déracinement*: the Eastern laws on marriage subject woman to a downward *déracinement social* (II, LXX) which can reduce to complete dependence a woman who is 'libre par l'avantage de sa naissance' (VII). The eunuch's downward *déracinement sexuel*, already mentioned, is (inadequately) compensated by an upward *déracinement social* (IX).

Atmosphere. The atmosphere is marked by a mixture of comic and tragic elements. A mood of violence and of inescapable tragic fate is engendered by the developments in the harem, the procrastination of Usbek, and the total inadequacy, for the solution of the problem, of the instruments (letters) used by Usbek to solve it. This drama is brutal and moving, involving terrible passions. Roger Laufer (p.200) sums up the atmosphere as 'un peu de comique, beaucoup de sérieux', and emphasises its tragic elements, referring to the *Lettres* as 'ce livre dont le dépaysement, puis le déracinement ('transplantés en Europe', disent les *Réflexions*) sont le climat émotionnel'.

Montesquieu himself, however, does not seem to have seen his work in this light. In fact, so far from seeing it as tragic or even serious, he claims to have achieved the gaiety that distinguished Montaigne, Rabelais, Scarron, Molière, and Pascal, and is lacking in Voiture and Fontenelle: 'Voiture a de la plaisanterie, et il n'a pas de gayeté. Montagne a de la gayeté et point de plaisanterie. Rabelais et le *Roman comique* sont admirables pour la gayeté. Fontenelle n'a pas plus de gayeté que Voiture. Molière est

admirable dans l'une et l'autre de ces deux qualités, et les *Lettres provinciales*, aussi. J'ose dire que les *Lettres persanes* sont riantes et ont de la gayeté, et qu'elles ont plu par là' (*Cahier*, pp.83-84).

The reasons for which Montesquieu is generally held to have said misleading things about the *Lettres persanes* are inoperative here: in fact, to emphasize the 'gaiety' of the work is to emphasize the wit and humour of the social satire at the expense of the oriental novel element he is always claimed to have misleadingly stressed. At the very least, this passage suggests that, in Montesquieu's eyes, while there is perhaps 'un peu de sérieux', there is above all 'beaucoup de comique'.

These considerations, however, which tend to reduce the importance of the tragic element, urge us to recall that only a quarter of the letters are devoted to the harem, so the general atmosphere is not predominantly tragic. They do not, however, militate against the *Lettres* being considered rococo: on the contrary, for the sense of violent tragedy is foreign to the rococo aesthetic.

Rococo, having had its fill of baroque extravagance and terror, has become refined and subtle, gay and amusing (in a word, feminine), and eschews violence. The comic element which thus dominates the *Lettres* is not restricted to that deliberately sought by the correspondents (XXIV, LII, etc.), it is also found in part in the oriental extravagances of phrasing (XVI, XVII), and even more in the arrogant confidence of the superstitious Mollak (XVIII). Here we have something a little closer to the rococo treatment of orientalism—unrealistic, fantastic, exotic, absurd. Orientalism, while not exclusive to the rococo, is fairly typical of it—the output of 'oriental' novels reached its highest peak in 1746, when the rococo style in the plastic arts was also at its most widespread[36].

Conclusion. In the *Lettres persanes*, Montesquieu attacks that typical baroque art form, the *pompe funèbre*: 'Je voudrais bannir

[36] see M. L. Dufresny, *Orient romanesque en France (1704-1789)* (Montréal 1946).

les pompes funèbres: il faut pleurer les hommes à leur naissance, et non pas à leur mort. A quoi servent les cérémonies, et tout l'attirail lugubre qu'on fait paraître à un mourant dans ses derniers moments, les larmes mêmes de sa famille et la douleur de ses amis, qu'à lui exagérer la perte qu'il va faire?' (XL). He also attacks the finesse and subtlety of rococo badinage: 'Je te promets que ces petits talents, dont on ne fait aucun cas chez nous, servent bien ici ceux qui sont assez heureux pour les avoir, et qu'un homme de bon sens ne brille guère devant eux' (LXXXII).

The building-up of the thematic structure by layers, and some minor aspects of the elements of female psychology, comedy, and oriental fantasy may be considered rococo; but the female psychology is mostly tragic (otherwise it is usually, though not always, criticised), the comedy is often used for critical purposes (political, social, moral, religious), and the oriental elements form part of a tragic pattern of superstition and repression.

The main characteristics of the work—the predominance of analysis and antithesis in the form (style and structure) and of criticism and didacticism in the content (subject, themes, meaning, philosophy),—together with the presence of some elements of violence and tragedy, suggest that the work tends most towards post-classicism or neo-classicism; and this accords with what we know of Montesquieu's professed tastes.

Rousseau on history, liberty, and national survival

by M. L. Perkins

Many works on Jean Jacques Rousseau emphasize the internal structure and domestic problems of the nation. They are inclined to see the state as an isolated unit. Even Windenberger and Lassûdrie-Duchêne[1], who do treat his ideas about the international scene, concentrate in large part on his belief in confederation as possibly the surest defensive measure available to the small state, or they examine the ramifications of his principle that wars are between states exclusively, never between a state and the individuals of another. These contributions by Rousseau are important, but other elements of his external politics, not stressed in the past, need exploration in my opinion to give perspective to his doctrine: his insights about history and historians; his ideas about countries of Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and their relationship to one another; his assumption that the state is in an exposed rather that sheltered condition; the corollary that foreign policy is a vital determinant in the rise and fall of the nation. Our presentation of these neglected aspects of Rousseau's moral and political thought takes the form of three sections and a conclusion. The first gives a brief account of his statements about history pertinent to internal and foreign politics. The second, reporting comments gathered in

[1] J. L. Windenberger, *La République confédérative des petits états* (Paris 1900); G. Lassûdrie-Duchêne, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau et le droit des gens* (Paris 1906).

an examination of all of Rousseau's writings, including his correspondence, shows these insights about history at work in the opinions he held concerning numerous ancient and modern nations. In the third and fourth parts his view of the attrition operating among nations is related in definite terms to the formulation and meaning of some of his fundamental ideas about liberty, contract, sovereignty, legislator, government, and religion.

I

Rousseau usually has high praise for the institutions, citizens, leaders, and enterprises of Sparta and Rome. He is scornful of most modern history, with the exception of certain deeds, characteristics, and governmental practices of the Swiss, who can boast of virtuous men. Rarely, Saint-Preux comments, do European nations deserve to have their histories told. Most of them are without the qualities which produce models of performance for others to follow. Their governments are equally colourless. Ancient history, to the contrary, is a valuable study. 'Great things' were accomplished with 'slight means', whereas the opposite happens today. Offering examples, customs and personalities of all kinds, its content is instructive (*Pléiade* ii.60, *Nouvelle Héloïse*, 1761)[2]. The old historians, successful teachers even when the facts they present seem false, are superior in spite of the erudite criticism used against them. With pretentious insistence on truth, the moderns overlook the important notion that sometimes 'sensible men should consider history a fabric of tales whose lesson is well suited to the human heart' (*Lahure* ii.128; *Emile*, 1762). Many recent historians in fact often sacrifice taste as well

[2] although numerous eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth-century editions have been consulted, for the reader's convenience references are to Gagnebin and Raymond (*Œuvres complètes*, i-iii, 1962-1964), designated as *Pléiade*; to the Hachette thirteen volume *Œuvres complètes*, 1865, indicated as *Lahure*; to *DP* or Dufour and Plan (*Correspondance générale*, 1924-1934), though this is now being superseded by the R. A. Leigh edition of the *Correspondance complète* (Institut et musée Voltaire, *in progress*).

as truth to their concern for wit, for colourful, but meaningless portraits. The *abbé* de Vertot, he finds, is almost the only European historian free of this affectation. Davila (Enrico), Guicciardini (Francesco), Solis (Antonio de), Machiavelli, and sometimes Thou (Jacques Auguste de), who tire and annoy the reader with such faults, are less penetrating than the ancients in their evaluations of human nature (p.209).

Striving for simplicity, avoiding personal judgments, the best historians allow one to draw his own conclusions. On this score, distinctions must be made even among the ancients. Some writers are not appropriate to all readers. Polybius and Sallust, according to Rousseau, are not for young men. Tacitus is 'the book of old men, young people are not capable of understanding him' (pp.209-210). The conclusion is that his analyses of men are too deep, that his acute, epigrammatic observations can be appreciated only by the discerning reader with long experience of life: 'one must learn to see the more apparent characteristics of the human heart in human actions before trying to fathom its depths; one must know how to interpret facts before interpreting maxims' (p.210). Thucydides, on the other hand, the 'true model of historians', would be good for Emile. Highly objective, he 'presents the facts without judging them' and 'does not omit any of the circumstances' essential to understanding the situation. Successfully removing his own presence from the description, he convinces the reader he is 'seeing' rather than 'reading'. Unfortunately, by talking too much of war, he teaches about 'the least instructive' kind of events. For almost the same reasons, Rousseau thinks Xenophon's *Anabasis* and the *Commentaries of Caesar* should receive both praise and blame. Herodotus, too, has merits and faults. He is unspoiled by the mania for portraits. He does not speak in maxims. In a 'flowing and simple' style, he presents many details which hold the attention, but which regrettably often approach childishness. Livy, although appropriate for men, is not suited to the young reader at all. He is too much of a politician and rhetorician (p.210).

Rousseau's comments, though in terms of a young reader's need, are nevertheless indicative of his opinion about the value of historians and history. If he seems at time to prefer writers who deal with facts alone and omit interpretations, it is because he thinks they deal less often in error. Some historians deliberately put their imagination to work and coat history with fiction. Their descriptions of events are then very much like gallant fantasies created by La Calprenède. This may not be harmful, provided the human heart is well described, but the practice is wrong, because it gives the historian too much authority, puts him in control of events. History, whenever possible, must be permitted to speak for itself (p.209). By this standard, Tacitus is found wanting, although Rousseau admires his delineations of character; Thucydides, Xenophon, and Caesar receive praise.

Rousseau's criticism of the last three writers for their excessive emphasis on war is part of his perspective. History 'in general', he finds, omits an important ingredient. Filled with names, places, dates, it rarely penetrates to the long-range causes which explain events. They are the most valuable facts of history, but 'remain always unknown'. Like omniscient gods, historians say with overbearing certitude just what went wrong for one side in a battle and how the other manœuvred to victory, whereas an element of chance, an unobserved natural phenomenon, may have had much more to do with the outcome: 'A tree more or less, a rock to the right or left, a whirlwind of dust raised by the wind, how many times have such factors determined success or defeat in combat without anyone having noticed'. The much vaunted modern criticism is only an 'art of conjecturing, the art of choosing among several lies the one which seems closest to the truth' (p.209). In describing a battle, a revolution, an election, writers give in detail their own shortsighted explanation. If they have a theory, it usually involves the strength or weakness of leaders, the soundness of their schemes, the size of their forces. Regardless of the facts, they are saying in effect repeatedly that one army was victorious because it had a better grasp of the military art than the

other. History is not just knowledge, skill, and deed. In large part, physical circumstance, the environment in which man lives, determines the course of events.

Abrupt and frightening illustrations of this type of causation are volcanoes, earthquakes, floods, so called accidents of nature. The groupings of men into societies are in large part the result of overflowing seas, shattering eruptions and earthquakes, fires started by lightning. Everything capable of frightening and dispersing men, 'must have later brought them back together to repair the common losses' (*Lahure* i.389; *Origine des langues*, 1750). Other causes, less violent, 'more general and permanent', are climate and the march of the seasons through winter, spring, summer, and fall (p.390). People born in hot areas migrated to cold zones and multiplied. Because of overcrowding, they then returned to their point of origin. This action and reaction helps explain 'the revolutions which occur on earth and the continual agitation of its inhabitants' (p.384). In hot regions, the situation of springs and lakes determined the location of settlements (p.390). Fertility of soil hurried the advance of society in some parts of the globe, as aridity delayed it in others (p.392). Toward the tropics, too, according to Rousseau, 'needs are born of passions', whereas in cold areas 'passions are born of needs'. As a result, languages varied sharply in characteristics between the two regions. 'Sad daughters of necessity', they reflect their origins (p.393). In the north, the language of gesture was first replaced by the language of words, since it was necessary to explain complicated mutual needs arising from the rigours of environment (p.394). Northern peoples, too, were strong and robust, because only the toughest could survive, and children kept the 'healthy constitution of their fathers' (p.393). Even liberty is in part, as Montesquieu had pointed out, dependent on climate. New evidence shows it cannot survive among all peoples (*Pléiade* iii.414; *Contrat social*, 1762). The very fate of a nation depends to some degree on size, as determined by natural boundaries, on richness of soil, on the extent of mountains, plains, and rivers.

Physical circumstance is not the only kind of causation historians overlook. They usually fail to see the moral background of events as well: 'They often find in a battle won or lost the explanation of a revolution which, even before this battle, had already become inevitable. War hardly does more than bring to a point of crisis events already determined long before by moral causes which historians rarely detect' (*Lahure* ii.210; *Emile*). True, all animals may be ingenious machines, and Rousseau speaks of the human machine, but he posits a basic difference between man and the other animals. Most animals 'choose or reject' by instinct. Man decides by 'an act of liberty'. The animal 'cannot stray from the pattern prescribed for him, even if it would be advantageous for him to do so', whereas man does depart from the normal, natural path, 'often to his own detriment' (*Pléiade* iii.141; *Inégalité*, 1755). If one refuses to admit freedom of will in man, then the fact of his perfectibility, the ability to adjust to circumstances by instrumental reason, can still not be denied. The first man 'who made clothes for himself or a dwelling acquired thereby things hardly necessary, since he got along without them until then' (p.140). It is necessary to suppose that he made this change and many others under the influence of different chance occurrences which 'have succeeded in perfecting human reason while causing the species to deteriorate' (p.162). The earth's convulsions drove him initially, but his own capacities caused him to find the solutions to constantly arising problems in a steady series of steps leading him deeper into society by the invention of metallurgy and agriculture, the resulting pursuit of possessions, the distribution of labour, the establishment of property to the exclusion and at the expense of one another (pp.169-170, 174-175). Such solutions resulting from human willful actions, as opposed to the physical circumstances which prompt them, produce definite moral effects, for example, the categories rich man, poor man, powerful man, weak man, master and slave (pp.177-187). Liberty and slavery, equality and inequality are causes which help explain the rise and fall of nations.

Historians, according to Rousseau, must avoid certain common assumptions: that accurate portrayal of the human heart justifies their romanticizing of the past, that wars in themselves are causes of national ascendency or decline, that a writer's own interests and prejudices can explain satisfactorily the course of events To write convincingly, they must take into account the determining effect of physical circumstance. They are to treat the deep moral causes which underly the fate of empire.

Facts which reveal the moral condition of a nation are often to be found, Rousseau believes, in the personalities and deeds of great men. They must be brought to life by the intimate details which modern portraitists, because of a false sense of propriety, dare not introduce. He indicates the kind of character revealing episode the *chevalier* Ramsay would omit in speaking of Turenne, whereas Plutarch would have succeeded in making the French general 'better known and loved' by carefully setting the stage. It is summer, a very hot day, in the home of Turenne. Informally dressed in cap and white coat, he is before the window of his ante-chamber. A servant enters, mistakes his master for a kitchen boy, and sneaking close to him lays a heavy-handed slap on the great man's buttocks. Turenne wheels about. Dumfounded, the servant cries out: 'I thought you were George'. Still smarting under the blow, Turenne replies: 'Even if it had been George, you didn't have to hit so hard' (*Lahure* ii.212; *Emile*). This kind of story, Rousseau thinks, reveals the inner man, 'it is in trifles that natural inclinations are discovered'. He regrets that the modern historian is so often preoccupied with commonly known public events: 'Physiognomy is not revealed in broad outlines, nor character in important actions'. When a leader is on display, 'in parade dress', he is seen as he pretends to be. The public posture hides the real man beneath: 'men are as dressed up by our authors in their private lives as they are on the stage of the world'. We know only 'the public man', an image arranged to be seen by the crowd. He is never shown 'in his office, with his family, in the midst of friends'. We know his uniform rather than his person.

Suetonius has no equal among modern writers, nor does Plutarch. The latter excels in the revealing details he gives: 'often a word, a smile, a gesture is enough to characterize his heroes. Hannibal reassures his terrified army with a joke and makes it march laughing to the battle which will win Italy for him'. Caesar in his off-guard moments, perhaps 'passing through a humble town', 'chatting with his friends', discloses the future 'impostor who said he wanted only to be the equal of Pompey' (pp.210-211).

This kind of error by omission has far reaching consequences, because individual character is the key to national character. The spirit of a people, Rousseau admits, is very different from the character of an individual man, and attempting to know the human heart without studying it 'in the crowd' would lead to very imperfect knowledge. But he insists that the evaluation of men must begin with the study of the individual, that a person who 'knew perfectly the inclinations of each individual [of a nation] could foresee all the effects [of these inclinations] when they were combined in the body of a people' (p.211). Numerous samplings of individual character permit an estimate of national fiber and a prediction of national intent.

It is through this inability to observe well that modern historians, according to Rousseau, fall short in most of their undertakings. The voyager-historians of the day, hopelessly unprepared, have not learned much, he fears, during the three or four hundred years they have travelled to all parts of the globe. Bound by their own preconceptions, they repeat only what Europeans already recognize or imagine they understand: 'I am convinced that the only men we know are Europeans; because of the ridiculous prejudices which have not yet died out even among writers, it seems that each does little more, when he pompously claims to be making a study of man, than to give an account of the men of his own country' (*Pléiade* iii.212; *Inégalité*). This blindness in the presence of the distinguishing features of another civilization, especially of distant countries, can be blamed on the types of visitors who do the reporting: sailors, merchants,

soldiers, and missionaries. The first three groups lack most of the qualifications Rousseau in *Emile* had made essential for accurately observing men: interest in knowing them; impartiality in judging them; a sensitive heart, capable of understanding all the human passions; enough equanimity not to be personally involved (*Lahure* ii.215). Members of the fourth group are too preoccupied with their sublime calling to indulge in investigations 'out of pure curiosity'. Lacking the special talent it takes for seeing differences, writers always miss 'those authentic traits which distinguish people from one another' (*Pléiade* iii.212; *Inégalité*). Other better qualified men have of course travelled. Several academicians have visited the northern sections of Europe and southern parts of America. Though primarily interested in the physical sciences, they were trained observers and made useful contributions, for example, La Condamine about Peru and the Amazon, Maupertuis about Lapland. Chardin, 'voyaging like a Plato', gave a thorough report on Persia. The Jesuits have written good accounts of China. Kaempfer described adequately 'the little he saw in Japan'. With these exceptions, Rousseau believes, the peoples outside of Europe are little known (p.213).

Preoccupation with money-making schemes have kept many European visitors to the East Indies from making worthwhile studies. All Africa and its inhabitants, 'as strange in character as in colour', have been neglected. So long as such ignorance exists, statements about the 'human race' are of little value. Rousseau senses keenly the need to have experienced scholars, like Montesquieu, Buffon, Diderot, Duclos, Alembert, or Condillac, fill these serious gaps with detailed analyses of the institutions, customs, and manners of many regions: Turkey, Egypt, Barbary, Morocco, Guinea, Kaffraria, the interior of Africa and its eastern coast; Tartary, Mongolia, China, Japan, Malabar, the banks of the Ganges, the kingdoms of Siam, Ava, and Pegu. In the western hemisphere, they should report on Mexico, Peru, Chile, Patagonia, Tucuman, Paraguay, Brazil, the peoples of Florida and the Carribean. From such voyages would come, Rousseau hopes,

the expert knowledge required to replace the opinion of amateurs, 'of crude travellers' engrossed only in what is familiar to them. The physical, moral, and political history of such areas would uncover the distinguishing features of exotic lands, of a rich new world of nations. Recognizing the contrasts with their own customs and institutions, Europeans would be more aware of the shared and varied characteristics of peoples of the earth. For the first time, 'we would thus learn to know' our own civilization (pp.213-214).

At present, however, modern readers who study the ancient historians know the early Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Gauls, and Persians better than 'any people today knows it neighbours' (*Lahure* II.424; *Emile*). No country prints more histories and accounts of voyages than France, yet there is no nation in which the genius, beliefs, and customs of other peoples are better concealed (p.422). Tacitus described the German tribes of his time better than any modern writer describes the eighteenth-century Germans. The question of the precise content of prejudice must therefore inevitably arise. Defining it, Rousseau notes three blind spots which affect the writer's vision. Even highly qualified observers may be influenced by these attitudes. First, most writers have a preference for what is highly civilized. Judging from reactions to his *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, Rousseau says he has had little success in convincing his listeners that 'barbarous' and 'criminal' are two very different ideas, that having bad laws is less indicative of corruption than having contempt for the laws of one's country. Regardless of his explanations, his point of view is considered scandalous. He has dared to defend and praise creatures 'who do not know how to read and write'. His opponents deny that there can be 'decency among people who go bare and virtue among those who eat raw flesh'. If the opinion of history should be sought, he would have Xenophon, Justin, and Tacitus on his side. In *Hellenica*, the first writer admires Sparta. Justin praises the simple life of the Macedonians. Tacitus in *Germania* contrasts barbarian freedom and simplicity with the

degeneracy of the late Romans. But against him would be Herodotus, Strabo, and Pomponius Mela, all of them more ready to sing the praises of civilization. Although he knows this battle of authorities could go on forever without deciding the issue, it is Rousseau's conviction that a prejudice against primitive peoples has had serious impact on the vision of modern historians (*Pléiade* iii.61, *Lettre à Grimm sur la réfutation par Gautier*, *1751*).

The second blind spot is the preference for political upheaval, violence, and catastrophe over the prosperity and calm of a people strong through liberty, national character, and a peaceable government. No nation attracts attention until it has ceased to be self-sufficient, until it has become inseparably linked to its neighbours, dependent on them in its needs: 'all our histories begin where they ought to end. We have in detail those [the histories] of peoples which are destroying one another; what we lack is that [the history] of peoples whose populations are multiplying'. This kind of bias is essentially a preoccupation with the corrupt and the dying, with the nation 'already in decline'. Governments which have the most merit in their conduct are talked of the least or ridiculed by history's very approach (*Lahure* ii.208; *Emile*).

Partiality for civilization and its corollary, concentration on sick and declining nations, are accompanied by the modern fondness for grandiose systems which invent a framework to explain the *status quo* in one neat package: 'The madness for systems having taken possession of all of them [writers of this century], none of them try to see things as they are, but as things agree with their system' (p.210). This penchant has in Rousseau's opinion given a third warp to history's foundation.

From this brief survey of Rousseau's ideas on ancient and modern historians comes some indication of his tinking about the purpose, content, and value of history. Properly done, it gives to the reader informative insights about the character of individuals and the spirit or genius of each nation, its liberty, sophistication, its institutions and laws. The rise and decline of each state may be

understood in terms of long-range factors, physical circumstances and the moral atmosphere arising from reason's adaptation to them. An understanding of the evolution of a nation in those terms should be the historian's chief concern. To deepen his insight, he must be aware of the characteristics of many peoples, whether barbarous or sophisticated, rising or declining. He must avoid as much as possible control of the facts by the straight-jacket of a philosophic system. History, as Rousseau conceives it, makes each people a value unto itself. The exploitation or subversion or conquest of a nation is recognized for what it is without attempt at justification by providence, doctrines of optimism, or nationalistic right. The object is to know the mechanics of a country's prosperity or ruin within its own framework. In its response to the pressure operating upon it, the smallest state may have discovered a clue useful to the theorist and may give data about many facets of politics, including the meaning of sovereignty, the rôle of individual citizens, the nature of governmental machinery, the structure of national economy, the place of religion, the aims of foreign policy. Under the influence of this notion, which makes each nation an experiment, Rousseau drew upon the customs, laws, and institutions of many countries in formulating and testing his moral and political doctrine.

II

Widely scattered throughout his writings, Rousseau's comments permit, after sifting and analysis, a clear impression concerning his knowledge of four continents and twenty-two nations. The order in which they are presented is my own and moves from Africa, including Egypt, also the Kafirs, to America, principally for references to Brazil, Mexico, and Peru, to Asia, for his remarks about the Arabs, Jews, Persians, and Chinese, to Europe, which provides observations about ancient societies, Athens, Sparta, Rome, and about modern nations, pawns, like Geneva, Corsica, Poland, Venice, and major agents in the struggle

for hegemony, Spain, the German Empire, Prussia, Russia, France, Holland, and England. In the study are incorporated his two principal criteria for evaluation: the influence of physical environment, such as climate, natural resources, surrounding nations; the rôle of moral causation in each society, including level of sophistication, condition of national character, status of individual liberty, attention to the people's will, the goals of foreign policy. If at times the details he offers now appear naive or commonplace, the reflection of eighteenth-century opinion, his remarks nevertheless, indicating information he considered valid, are the building blocks on which much of his understanding of the international scene depends.

Africa, South America, Asia

Africa for Rousseau is Egypt and the little known tribes of remote wildernesses. 'First school of the universe', Egypt was benefited by a fertile climate, thus became one of the first powerful states, and under Sesostris aspired to world domination, a goal and policy which strained her resources to the point of exhaustion. The admiration of her people for learning also introduced weakness. While bearing the title of mother of philosophy and fine arts, Egypt became in quick succession the conquest of the Persians, Greeks, Romans, the Arabs, the Turks (*Pléiade* iii.10; *Discours sur les sciences et les arts*, 1750).

The rest of the continent discloses scenes of ignorance and European inhumanity. Without the skill and habit of reflection, its barbarous peoples, like the Kafirs, are fatigued by the smallest mental effort. If they have heard of god and wondered about the horizon, sky, sun, moon, stars, the marvels of earth and nature, they are not capable of understanding him in the European way or of grasping the admirable order which reigns in the universe. If those who live in tribes have ideas 'acquired and communicated' from generation to generation, they still hold only 'crude notions of a divinity'. In that sense alone would they have a catechism

(*Lahure* iii.75-76; *Lettre à m. de Beaumont*, 1763). The 'vast and unfortunate regions' of Africa are apparently 'destined only to cover the earth with herds of slaves', to the shame of mankind. Saint-Preux is filled with horror and pity when he sees members of the human race brutally 'changed into beasts for the service of others' (*Pléiade* ii.414; *Nouvelle Héloïse*). Their fate is the price of primitive ignorance in a world of artificial values.

South America, its subjugation the result of physical circumstance, is for Saint-Preux that 'vast continent which lack of iron submitted to the Europeans'. Depravity of every kind accompanied the event. Cruel, marauding armies, supported by cavalry with superior weapons and armour, laid waste a rich and fertile land in order to guarantee possession of it. For profit, perhaps for the sake of destruction, which they seemed to regard as profit in itself, the invaders invoked the 'right of war' and set fire to entire cities, defenseless before the onslaught of the 'learned, humane, and polished peoples of Europe'. Greed and right of the strongest allowed no restraint in the exploitation that followed. While Lisbon and London drained off the treasures of Brazil, the natives of the country dared not touch the gold and diamonds which rightfully belonged to them. In Mexico and Peru, the situation of the Aztecs and Incas was similarly pitiful. Sad remnants of two once powerful peoples, they were 'burdened with chains, shame, and misery amidst their rich metals' and lamented the day the heavens saw fit to lavish upon them so many treasures, the coveted prize of the conquistadors. The enormity of the imperialistic claims of the Hapsburgs in the new world appalls Rousseau. Saint-Preux 'is struck with wonder' by the idea that a coast fifteen hundred leagues in extent and the largest ocean in the world could be 'under the sway' of a single power, that Spain in effect 'holds the keys to one hemisphere of the globe' (*Pléiade* ii.413; *Nouvelle Héloïse*).

Rousseau cites the rôle of the Tlaxcalans during the conquest to illustrate two principles: that the independence of a state is proportionate to the moral fibre of its people, their will to

self-sufficiency; that a large nation, which by the accident of proximity, poses a threat to a small country, should avoid coercing that state in any way. Tlaxcala illustrates the first principle when, needing salt, she sensed the impediment to her freedom hidden in the offer of the Mexicans to sell it or supply it for nothing. She did without salt and remained aloof, though enclosed within the Aztec Confederation. The Aztecs, in exception to the second principle, refused their weak neighbour passageway to the salt beds, thus hastened their own ruin. Tlaxcala, as principal Indian ally of Cortéz, helped subvert the Empire (*Pléiade* iii.391-392; *Contrat social*).

Africa and South America are for Rousseau exploited continents, the first for its negroes, the second for its gold, silver, and land. Such goals are indication of the degenerate values of declining European nations, which place their faith in technology, riches, and force, as did to some extent the Egyptians, Aztecs, and Incas before them. Asia, including the middle east, offers in the past and present lessons more positive in nature.

The Jews, remarkable in Rousseau's eyes for the lasting ties which make them endure as a people, distrusted learning and were preoccupied with religion. Their leaders deliberately isolated them from the more cultured and idolatrous peoples on their confines. After the dispersals, in spite of frequent contact with Egypt and Greece, they failed to make significant headway in the sciences. The evidence is in the inferior quality of their scholars and philosophers. Flavius Josephus and Philo Judaeus, two very average men in Rousseau's opinion, were considered prodigies of erudition by the Jews. The Sadducees, known for their laxity, irreligion, and love of privilege, were the 'philosophers of Jerusalem'. The Pharisees limited their science to study of the law. Pompously and dogmatically following regulations, customs, and ceremonies to the letter, they consistently violated the spirit of the scriptures. Rousseau calls them 'big hypocrites', men of 'great pride' and 'very little science' (*Pléiade* iii.44-45; *Sciences et arts*). The status of the practical arts, which he finds similarly low

among the Jews, is deduced from the attitude toward agriculture expressed by Moses when he made Cain its inventor: 'It was as if the character of the first tiller of the soil warned against the evil effects of his art'. The author of *Genesis* 'had seen further into the future than Herodotus', who praised this art in his *History* (*Lahure* i.388; *Origine des langues*).

Consistent with this prejudice of the Jews against the sciences and the arts was the orientation of their legislation toward religion, the nation's principal object (*Pléiade* iii.393; *Contrat social*). If man 'is made for society, the truest religion' might be supposed 'the most social and humane' religion. Facts, however, disprove the assumption. The Jews, with their revealed religion, were 'the born enemies of all other peoples'. They founded their nation by 'destroying seven nations, according to the positive, precise order they had received to do so' (*Lahure* iii.88-89; *Lettre à m. de Beaumont*). Religion, contributing more than anything else to their isolation and spirit of cohesiveness, guaranteed the longevity of their nation. 'To prevent his people from becoming merged with foreign peoples', Moses purposely formed within them a distinct mentality and character. Religious customs and practices were fraternal bonds separating the Jews from other clans, turning them as one man against hostile neighbours. The frequent subjugation and ruin of this people has always been more apparent then real: 'its customs, laws, and rites remain and will last as long as the world, in spite of hate and persecution from the rest of mankind' (*Pléiade* iii.956-957; *Gouvernement de Pologne*, 1771). By thus moulding the Jews, Moses performed a miracle in law-giving which 'five thousand years have not succeeded in destroying or even altering'. Resisting the disintegrating influence of curiosity's search for materialistic knowledge, more inclined to creeds, sacraments, and solemnities, the Jews by the power of Mosaic insight received a religious institution so sound and vigorous they outlasted their own civil structure.

Glimpses of the national character of the Arabs may be obtained, Rousseau believes, from aspects of their justice and religion. They

are less harsh with captives than are Europeans. Without pity or kindness, their justice is still superior, because it is free of economic taint. Arabs expect a man to perform and accomplish to the limits of his capacity and then demand no more. In determining guilt, they do not, like the Europeans, penalize a person for being weak, therefore a poor bargain. They accuse bad intentions alone. Negro slaves would under the Arabian system rarely suffer. Under European justice they sicken, die, are in fact often murdered, because for their masters they are but 'instruments of work', whose chief crime is their inability to labour hard and long enough to satisfy their owner's lust for gain (*Lahure* iii.27; *Emile et Sophie*).

As for religion, the Arabs who believe all the sciences are to be found in the Koran are, Rousseau admits, perhaps as fanatical as those Christians who, even though Jesus said man's civil activities are of this world, still maintain that the science of salvation includes the science of government (*Pléiade* iii.706; *Lettres écrites de la montagne*, 1764). He indicates, however, that in his mind the theocratic concepts and claims of the Mohammedans, unlike those of certain Christians, have historical justification. The destiny of the Arabs has always centred around religion, a fact reflected in their laws and institutions (p.393; *Contrat social*). With this background, faith is not for them a source of division, as it often is within Christian states. Firmly embedded in the hearts and minds of the people, an integral part of state policy and interest, Islam is the nation, an inspiring, cohesive force which explains Arabia's civic solidarity, its one time ascendency in west Asia, in parts of Africa and Europe.

Farther to the east, Persia offers for Rousseau the spectacle of a great empire ignominiously defeated in spite of an originally healthy community life. Persian custom, practiced also by other early peoples, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and Romans, usually kept women in the home and during social affairs apart from the men. Largely to this public segregation, Rousseau attributes the stability of Persian family life and civic sentiment: husband and wife were very close in the home, the sense of kinship was strong,

parents and children respected one another (*Lahure* i.238, *Lettre à d'Alembert*, 1758). Though scorned by the *philosophes* as superstitious, Persian religious beliefs, too, were valuable for their effect both on rulers and populace. The bridge called Poul-Serrho is the way 'over the eternal fire' and 'the true final judgment'. There the good are separated from the evil, a belief which accomplishes two purposes: it helps prevent people from committing crimes; it comforts those without redress against injustice to know death brings a final settling of account. Unrestrained by such a teaching, tyrants have little concern for the welfare of their subjects. The inclination of the *philosophes* to ridicule this and other credos is socially harmful. Their newly invented moral systems often seem impressive, but none of them can replace the Poul-Serrho (*Lahure* ii.287; *Emile*). Religious beliefs lie deep in the national soul, inspire and sustain it better than any artificial doctrine borrowed from abroad.

A defect more basic than superstition undermined Persian character. Unaware that idle men in other nations spent their time debating the meaning of the greatest good, of virtue and vice, untroubled that by such reasoners they might be called barbarians, the early Persians were content to found their happiness on virtue as fortitude, military skill, and civic pride. A strong and manly people, used to all kinds of hardships, a model for others, they 'subjugated Asia' with ease (*Pléiade* iii.11; *Sciences et arts*). But their time of decadence was to come. They were demoralized as a people long before their generals and soldiers were defeated on the field of battle. Under Darius III, when the Persians had been made effeminate by advancing civilization, the monarchy of Cyrus 'with thirty thousand men' fell to Alexander III, 'a prince poorer than the very least of the satraps of Persia' (p.20). Religion, a source of unity for the Persians, as for the Jews and Arabs, in this instance proved incapable of combatting the degenerative effect of new ideas.

China had several governmental procedures of interest to Rousseau. With respect to public revolt, he notes the emperor's

maxim that in all troubles which arise between him and his people the blame must fall upon his officials. If there is an outcry because bread costs too much in a certain province, he has his tax-collector imprisoned. If a riot occurs in another, the governor is dismissed. Each mandarin is held immediately and directly accountable with his head for any disturbances which occur in his department. Only later is the matter investigated at a regular trial. The advantage of the method in Rousseau's view is that through these upheavals the general will has raised the question of fair play and a decisive answer has been given. Rarely is injustice done, and the emperor 'always discovers, through the seditious outbursts he punishes, certain legitimate complaints to correct' (*Pléiade* iii.285; *Economie politique*, 1755). It is the Chinese view, unpopular among European kings, that 'the public clamour never arises without cause', that the authorities have first in some way infringed upon the laws. Oriental despotism maintains itself in the final analysis because it is 'more severe on the nobles than on the people'. In this regard, statistics support the Chinese way. There is 'no abatement' in the population of China, whereas in European states the 'population diminishes everywhere by one tenth every thirty years' (p.843; *Lettres écrites de la montagne*).

The tax policy of the Chinese also favours the common man. European administrators seem to think the peasant must be sorely burdened to overcome his laziness: 'he would do nothing if he had nothing to pay'. The opinion is not borne out by experience: 'It is in Holland, in England, where the farmer pays very little, and especially in China, where he pays nothing, that the earth is cultivated the best' (p.273; *Economie politique*). The location of the tax is important, too, and should rest with the user rather than with the seller. If not, the merchant may be so laden he has to resort to fraud. Consumer taxation is the practice in China, the very country in which 'taxes are the heaviest and the best paid'. There 'the seller pays nothing; the buyer alone pays duty'. The wisdom of an accompanying provision prevents complaints. The 'staples necessary to life, such as rice and wheat', are 'absolutely

free of duty'. The people are not hurt, and 'the tax falls only upon those who are well-off' (p.276).

Nevertheless, China has a people wallowing in vice and crime and dangerously lacking in patriotism (p.11; *Sciences et arts*). Her vast population is for the most part submitted in slavish fashion to a handful of brigands. Soft from luxury, she is conquered whenever attacked and will always be the prey of less civilized nations (*Pléiade* ii.413-414; *Nouvelle Héloïse*; iii.431; *Contrat social*). Her ability to continue as a nation rests on two means: the attention each ruler pays to the animal wants of the populace; the fascination Chinese culture holds for each new conqueror, victor in the military sense, but victim in turn of the refinement which made conquest easy.

Rousseau felt intensely the need for freeing his thinking from the European values stressed by contemporary historians. With thoughtful and doubting reliance on histories and travel accounts, he many times in his writings returns to aspects of Africa, America, and Asia. He is interested in long-range causation as physical circumstance and moral condition. Africa represents for him two extremes. Because of climate, Egypt became highly sophisticated early in history. Pursuing ambitions for conquest, she was repeatedly conquered in her turn. The natives of the interior are victims of their environment, which has kept them ignorant, and of rapacious traders, the economic arm of the depraved foreign policy of European powers. Advanced in their civilizations, the great nations of South America were defeated partly by physical causes, lack of iron for weapons, unfriendly provinces within their borders, or by moral conditions, their gullibility, lack of discipline, their division in the face of a ruthless enemy, its designs sustained by religious zeal, ecclesiastical law, and a highly developed military art. Partially removed from the eighteenth-century cultural ambient, Rousseau condemns many customs and institutions of Europe while admiring their healthier moral counterparts in the Asian Near and Far East: the cohesive force of the Jewish people; justice as practiced by the Arabs, their

total union of religion with state; the family life of the Persians, their adherence to old beliefs; the methods used by the emperors of China to know the grievances of the people and protect them from excessive tax burdens.

He has encountered, too, many of the same values he mistrusts, for the countries he describes have been threatened by the debilitating effects of sophistication, have been involved because of moral decay in wars of conquest, have repeatedly seen their ambitions advanced, now destroyed, by hostile states on their frontiers. In Africa, America, and Asia, the violence he deplores is also present in the conflicting national interests of the nations of Europe, their policies based on almost identical goals, the acquisition of territory and goods. Their rivalries, undiminished by the vast expanses in which they manœuvre, make each nation's seamen, in the words of Saint-Preux, the implacable enemies of the crews of foreign vessels: 'In the vast ocean, in which it ought to be so pleasant for men to meet other human beings, I have seen two great ships seek, find, attack, fight one another in fury, as if that immense space was too small for both of them. I have seen them vomit iron and flame against each other. In a rather short combat I saw the image of Hell. I heard the shouts of joy given by the victors cover the cries of the wounded and the groans of the dying' (ii.414; *Nouvelle Héloïse*).

From the information Rousseau accepts about a number of lands have come perhaps no very original theories, but rather intellectual and emotional reinforcement for convictions basic to his understanding of international relations, support at most for the following conclusions: the usual inefficacity of international law; the prevalence of the use of force in affairs between states; the frequent predominance of the profit motive in European justice and foreign policy; the importance of religion to national cohesiveness and survival in a doubting, materialistic, warring world.

Ancient Europe

Information about countries in Africa, South America, and Asia could help free Rousseau from the framework of his contemporary Europe. A similar liberation can be felt in the passages he devotes to ancient Athens, Sparta, and Rome. Their citizens are for him like giants when in imagination they are placed next to a Frenchman, Englishman, or Spaniard.

The early moral strength of the Greeks rested on simplicity. They had only primitive needs, were dedicated to the state, and took pride in their military prowess. Bowing to no obstacle, they were able to conquer Asia twice, first at Troy, later in its heartland. Their feeling of isolation, which made them see all other peoples as barbarians, their use of slaves, and their theatre contributed to the formation of a strongly patriotic character. In Rousseau's account, the ability to defend one's borders, then to drive back and defeat surrounding nations, is the measure of national health.

'Vain and loving dialectic', they were unable, because of their biased division of the world's peoples into Greeks on the one hand and barbarians on the other, to make any distinction among the many nations they classified in a general way as 'barbarians'. They were content to see themselves as the 'natural sovereigns' of all peoples (*Pléiade* iii.565; *Paix perpétuelle*, 1756; p.460, *Contrat social*). Uniformity in outlook, coming from the close association of all modern European nations, serves to break down national barriers, whereas Greek scorn and sense of superiority nourished feelings of national cohesiveness.

The prevalence of slavery among the Greeks, if not condoned, is at least explained by Rousseau. It was not a vicious, profit-making device, but rather, because of difficulties in gaining a living from the soil, an essential ingredient of liberty. The use of slaves gave the Greeks time to assemble in the public square and decide issues related to the common good: 'Everything that is not a part of nature has its inconveniences, and civil society more than

everything else. There are unfortunate situations in which one's own liberty cannot be preserved except at the expense of another's, and in which the citizen cannot be perfectly free unless the slave is extremely enslaved' (p.431; *Contrat social*).

The theory that the theatre contributed to national character also has its logic. Having invented this art, the Greeks had little knowledge of its dangers. When they were more aware of them, the disease was too well established to be eradicated. But there were very positive arguments favouring the theatre. In the beginning, it was closely associated with religion, so that 'the actors [were] regarded more as priests than entertainers'. The subjects they presented were not viewed as fables. Seen as episodes of national history, they were closely tied to Greek reality, their enthusiasm for liberty, their earlier misfortunes, the crimes of former masters, a psyche that believed the Greeks were the only men free by nature: 'I am not surprised that far from vilifying them [the performers], the profession thus practiced gave them the proud courage and noble selflessness which seemed sometimes to transform the actor into the personage he was representing'. The serious function and dedication of the player explains for Rousseau the high office actors sometimes held in company with the great men of Greece (*Lahure* i.230-231; *Lettre à d'Alembert*; *Pléiade* ii.251; *Nouvelle Héloïse*). Although he adds that the Greeks best known for their virtue were the Spartans, who had no theatre, his positive attitude still outweighs the qualification. The theatre was not an artificial acquisition, as it would be for Geneva. Rooted in Greek origins, this art, along with the public games, inspired citizens to great deeds: 'Homeric poetry recited to the Greeks in solemn assembly, not in closed rooms, on stage, and for money, but in the open air and as a national body; the tragedies of Æschylus, of Sophocles, and of Euripides often performed before their eyes; the prizes with which to the acclamation of all Greece one crowned the victors in the games; these are the events which, firing the Greeks continually with emulation and glory, carried their courage and their virtues to that degree of

energy nothing can help us imagine today and which we moderns cannot even believe' (*Pléiade* iii.958; *Gouvernement de Pologne*).

The vigour of the early Greeks is contrasted with the later slavish attitudes which devotion to personal desires introduced into each heart. A person is no longer free when he cares more for something outside himself, comfort, wealth, beauty, than for his own independence. Alexander made other nations subservient to him by skilfully manipulating their wants. The Ichthyophages were self-sufficient through their fishing. Alexander forced them to feed on and eventually require foods produced and controlled by Greek industry. Similarly, when the arts had become a passion for the Greeks, he put the entire state under the yoke, and most of Greece, 'always learned, always voluptuous, and always enslaved', repeatedly became the victim of new masters: 'All of the eloquence of Demosthenes could never give new life to a body debilitated by luxury and the arts' (pp.7, 10; *Sciences et arts*). The Goths did not burn the libraries of Greece. They were convinced the surest way to undermine the military power of the Greeks was to encourage them in their idle, sedentary life of study (p.22). Men made soft by scholarly pursuits could no longer endure the hunger, thirst, fatigue, and terror encountered in the most routine campaign.

This contrast between Greece in health, characterized by dedication to the state, freedom from all but basic needs, emphasis on individual integrity and courage, and Greece in decline, with emphasis on the satisfaction of selfish wants, on the accumulation of material gain, is illustrated further by Rousseau's belief in the superiority of Sparta over Athens. The latter, city of philosophy, rhetoric, and taste, was essentially the object-oriented culture expressed in its great buildings fashioned out of marble, a culture admired, imitated all over the world, the symbol of artistic, literary, commercial, industrial value (p.12). Such orientation meant placing letters above national survival. During a time of calamity, when Athens was 'rich enough to spend immense sums on its plays and pay very dearly its authors, actors, and even the

spectators, this very period was the one in which there was no money to defend the state against Philip's project for conquest' (p.89; *Réponse à M. Bordes*).

The far different reputation of Sparta rested on heroic deeds, more fitting monuments, Rousseau believes, than statues and edifices in marble (pp.12-13; *Sciences et arts*). The Spartans did not unwittingly avoid the weakening effect of advancing culture. Deliberately 'You [Sparta] chased the arts and artists, the sciences and scientists, away from your walls' (p.12). While thus preventing any preoccupation with external objects, the Spartans at the same time stressed perfection in individual virtue. The glory of Sparta was in its men 'born virtuous, and the very air of the country seems to inspire virtue' (p.13). Rousseau repeatedly calls attention to the protection and respect given to each individual Spartan. The need for punishing a guilty citizen was cause for great public concern (p.257; *Economie politique*). His loss was seen as a diminution of the nation.

In opposition to the Athenian situation, too, each Spartan was trained to incorporate the nation into his own being. Rousseau describes the regime by which Lycurgus reformed individuals. Upon taking the reigns of government, he was faced with the task of moulding the character of men used to servitude and its accompanying vices. He imposed on them the 'yoke of iron', which became their life, their identity. The homeland entered the heart of each person, had a central rôle in the 'laws' he obeyed, the 'games' he played, was part of his every action, whether 'in the home, in his loves, in his celebrations'. By this 'constraint', a means 'ennobled by its purpose', Lycurgus instilled in each citizen 'that burning love of country which was always the strongest or rather the sole passion of the Spartans, and which turned them into beings greater than mankind' (p.957; *Gouvernement de Pologne*). Filled with the state, its needs, and interests, the individual had no place left in his soul for the worship of things, money, goods, luxury. Wheareas Athens, admired abroad for philosophy, sculpture, and architecture, was internally sick

because of the softness of its people, Sparta, 'only a city', 'by the strength of its institution alone', was capable of giving 'laws to all Greece, became its capital, and caused the Persian empire to tremble. Sparta was the heart from which [Greek] legislation extended its effects to surrounding nations' (p.957).

The Spartans, however, had two flaws. Their love of conquest eventually resulted in a softness as harmful as that caused by Athenian love of luxury: 'the fatigues of war were the softness of Sparta'. Pursuing this inclination, the Spartans were fated to become as ordinary men. Partly out of weariness, they were pushed back from their former dominions to their own territorial limits. But fatigue was not the only cause of their decline. The homeland was too dear to them. In order to save it, they would sacrifice all alse. Love of country, for which they were 'always ready to die', had become their highest good. Patriotism, attachment to rock, hill, and soil, was even stronger in them than love of liberty itself, a far superior inspiration in Rousseau's opinion, alone capable of making a people staunch in the face of the enemy, unbending to the end even at the cost of the nation itself (pp.541-543; *Parallèle entre Sparte et Rome*).

The superiority Rousseau grants Rome over Sparta is for the most part based on this distinction between patriotism and liberty. Jewish religious unity was unexcelled. Sparta stood for individual character growth to the extent that patriotic interest silenced selfish interest. With Rome, as Rousseau interprets its history, the collective spirit of a people reached new heights. The phenomenon included elements of both the Jewish and Spartan kinds of cohesiveness, but surpassed them through the people's greater dedication to liberty and the means of preserving it. A highly respected legal structure expressed the needs of the people, safeguarded their rights, and perpetuated Roman love of order long after the soul of the nation had died.

If Rome was founded by a group of 'bandits', as popular belief maintains, those unpromising origins, Rousseau insists, produced within a short time 'the most virtuous people that has ever

existed'. The term 'bandit' must be properly qualified. Virtue and vice, 'collective ideas', spring up only after long periods of communal living. The early ancestors of the Romans were more amoral than either virtuous or vicious. Far from corrupt, their passage from a mere crowd into a people owed nothing to sophistication. If, later, the Romans in celebrating their victories displayed 'an enormous luxury', it for a long time in no way detracted from their simplicity. They displayed the wealth of the peoples they conquered. Bound with chains of gold and precious stones, the captive rulers made useful examples of the weakening effect luxury has on a country. With all their riches, these conquered nations were no match for a poorer, but hardier people (*Pléiade* iii.964; *Gouvernement de Pologne*). The first two kings who 'gave form to the republic and instituted its customs and manners' were in fact crude and benighted. Romulus was a warrior and spent his life waging war. Numa was completely dedicated to 'religious rites' (ii.971; *Narcisse*, 1752). Religion and military courage help account for Rome's early spirit of solidarity. 'True founder of Rome', Numa welded into a united citizenry the 'brigands' Romulus had merely assembled. He succeeded 'less by laws' than by common institutions which 'attached them to one another and all of them to their land'. The sacred rites he introduced may have appeared 'frivolous and superstitious', but they had a powerful and effective hold over the people. Romulus, too, in spite of his fierceness, his reputation for founding the military institutions of Rome, had also helped establish common religious beliefs and practices (iii.957-958; *Gouvernement de Pologne*).

Accompanying this rustic foundation of shared religious rites and military courage was Roman love of order. Of all peoples, the Romans 'transgressed their laws the least' and had the 'finest laws' (pp.357, 1441; *Contrat social*). All laws, if useful and reasonable, seemed to bind them. They 'understood and respected more than any other nation in the world the law of war', for example, the provision that a citizen was not allowed 'to serve as a

volunteer, unless he had positively and clearly enlisted against the enemy and against a particular enemy'. This moral attitude strengthened assemblies, courts, and police, made Roman law almost indestructible, a force felt long after the old physical form of the Empire had disappeared. Respect for Rome so effectively 'survived her power' that many jurisconsuls later raised the question 'whether the Emperor of Germany was not the natural sovereign of the world; and Bartoldus went so far as to treat as heretic anyone who dared to question it' (pp.567, 1544; *Projet de paix perpétuelle*).

Part of the true worth of Roman law lay in the continuing protection it was able to give to institutions and values important both to leaders and the people: respect for family, father, mother, respect for liberty. Roman character was maintained 'for five hundred years a continuing miracle', not through public education, but because virtue, based on a horror of tyranny, its crimes, and on 'innate love of country', was a reality in each household. The law had simply to encourage the prevalent integrity of family life. Each home was a school for citizens. Authority there was precisely designated and effectively exercised. The control of the father over his children was limitless, his private policing of manners severe. 'More feared than the magistrates', he was a 'censor of morals and the enforcer of laws' (pp.261-262; *De l'économie politique*).

Rome also prized women. Their influence, Rousseau says, permeated all the affairs of the state. They were closely associated with moments of glory and victory, with sorrow, with the need for courage in times of trouble. The presence of women on festive occasions 'honoured the exploits of great generals'. Women publicly wept when the fathers of the homeland died. Their marriage vows and periods of mourning were regarded with solemnity. They were able to introduce important changes within the state. Rome acquired liberty, the plebeians were admitted to the consulate, the tyranny of the decemvirs came to a close, all because of women. Because of a procession of women,

according to a legend cited by Rousseau, Rome when besieged 'was saved' from the Volscians and the treachery of the exile Coriolanus (*Lahure* ii.362; *Emile*).

Related to the stability, trust, and dignity inspired by a family life in which father and mother commanded respect and in which children were imbued with feelings of responsibility to fellow-citizens and state was a firm belief in individual life and liberty. The Romans in their best years were superior to other peoples 'by the consideration the government had for individuals and by its scrupulous attention in respecting the inviolable rights of all the members of the state'. 'Nothing was so sacred as the life of the ordinary citizen'. 'To condemn him', it was necessary to hold an 'assembly of the entire people'. By the law Porcia the death sentence could be commuted to exile 'for all those who would want to survive the loss of so sweet a homeland'. Respect for individual rights was essential to leadership. Addressing ambitious rulers, Rousseau says on the strength of the Roman example that 'if to rule is a proud profession, it is when those who obey us can respect us; respect therefore your fellow-citizens and you will become respectable'. The leader who upholds freedom will see his 'power increase every day', for if he does not exceed his rights, 'soon they will be limitless'. Because of this esteem for the individual, the resulting belief in and love of the name Roman 'incited the virtue of whoever had the honour to bear it', a fact which helped make Rome the 'mistress of the world' (*Pléiade* iii.257-258; *Economie politique*; p.377, *Contrat social*).

But Roman liberty was more than respect for the life and rights of each citizen. Liberty was also self-government. 'The Roman people itself, that model of all free peoples', was not always capable of governing itself. It was necessary to raise men up gradually, to accustom them to 'breathe the salutary air of liberty' until they had reached 'that severity of manners and that pride in courage which made of them finally the most respectable of all peoples' (p.113; *Inégalité*). Rousseau's aim in chapter IV of the *Contrat social* is to determine 'how the most free and powerful

people of the earth exercised its supreme power' or sovereignty (p.444).

Overlooked or at least much neglected in the past is this highly significant relationship made by Rousseau between 'most free' and 'most powerful', a linking which occurs frequently in his writings, but which appears only now in sharp relief because of the background provided by other nations he has already described. Pressure on each state from international rivalries was always implicit, usually explicit, in his treatment of the countries of Africa, South America, Asia. Sparta was presented by him in a warring context. Surrounded by enemies, a fact of its physical environment, Rome, too, had as its primary concern the need to survive. Her moral condition, liberty as self-government, made possible by a character derived from early religious and military institutions, from respect for law, family, and the individual, regularly appears as the source of national power in Rousseau's account of Rome. The liberty-power-survival nexus occurs both in his analysis of Rome in health, that is, during her period of democratic rule, and in his study of Rome in decline, when usurpation had worn away liberty's substance.

Rousseau's discussion of her ascendent democratic institutions which served to express the people's will and channel it into action is less in terms of the individual's right to participate in community decisions or of the protection of this and of other rights as ends in themselves than in terms of the entire people's involvement, its sense of belonging to a movement greater than any person or faction, of having confidence in aims relating to the national past, to goals capable of transforming by force and law the ancient Mediterranean and European world. As he interprets the characteristics of this very active, living communal association, Rousseau measures the effectiveness of each of its features by the power as well as the liberty it generates, by its contribution to Roman hegemony.

In the first place, tradition perpetuated an early preference which drew the nation's leaders from the rural population. Because of

the 'taste of the first Romans for country life', the nation consistently held the country tribes to be superior and relegated to the cities 'the arts, the trades, intrigue, wealth, and enslavement'. Rousseau's authority is Pliny, who 'says positively that the country tribes were honoured because of the men who composed them, whereas the cowards, whom one wanted to disgrace, were transferred in ignominy to the city tribes'. There was a prevalent, collective trust in the health, simplicity, and vigour of rural life, the condition of the worthiest patricians, as opposed to the 'idle and slothful life' of the bourgeois of Rome. The wretched commoner of the city had his counterpart in the farm labourer, but with the difference that the latter was a respected citizen. The village was the 'nursery of those robust and valiant men' who defended Rome in time of war and nourished her in time of peace. According to Rousseau, this unprecedented distinction between 'tribes of the country' and 'tribes of the city' aided Rome in 'the preservation of her manners and customs and the growth of her empire' (pp.445-446, *Contrat social*). The sense is that rural leadership was essential both to Rome's liberty and her might.

Second, for a long time the people through its assemblies was 'truly sovereign both *de jure* and *de facto*'. The Romans were divided into *tribes*, into *centuries*, and into *curiae*. When the assemblies or *comitia* were called together, they met either as *comitia curiata*, *comitia centuriata*, or *comitia tributa*. Since every citizen was 'enrolled' in one of these groups, and 'no law received its sanction and no official was elected except in one of the *comitia*', it can be said that 'no citizen was excluded from the right to vote' (p.449). Even after corruption had sapped the strength of the Republic, the collective will continued to be expressed, though distortedly: 'in the midst of all these abuses, the vast people, thanks to its ancient regulations, never ceased to elect magistrates, to pass laws, to judge cases, and to carry through business both public and private almost as easily as the senate itself could have done' (p.453). In addition to expressing the sovereign will, the assemblies in fact had 'usurped' the most important functions of

government, so that it is true in a sense that they determined 'the fate of Europe' (pp.449-450). The liberty which Rousseau admires in this passage has a long reach. It is capable of extending the will of the Roman people to the ends of the ancient European world.

Third, the Roman people was steadfast in its determination to express its will directly rather than through intermediaries. Size of population hampered discussion, debate, and voting. Rousseau reports that the last census showed in Rome 'four hundred thousand citizens bearing arms' and for the Empire more than four million citizens, 'not counting subjects, foreigners, women, children, slaves' (p.425). In the time of the Gracchi, the crowd was so numerous some citizens had to 'cast their votes from the roofs of buildings' (p.430). In spite of difficulties 'in frequently bringing together the population of the capital and its suburbs', there were 'few weeks that the Roman people was not assembled, and even several times' (p.425). The obstacles were aggravated by those magistrates inclined to oppose the people's control of the legislative and executive. When the people was legitimately assembled, the government's power was 'suspended', because when the person represented is present, 'there is no longer a representative' (pp.427-428). When there were tumults in the assemblies, it was because this rule was 'not understood' or was 'neglected'. In the assemblies, the consuls were 'merely the presidents of the people; the tribunes were mere speakers; the senate was nothing at all' (p.428). Because the Romans did not fear that their lictors wanted to assume the permanent function of representatives, they often entrusted to them powers denied to the tribunes: 'Where right and liberty are everything, disadvantages count for nothing' (p.430). Any yielding in this arduous fight for direct sovereignty, Rousseau leaves no doubt, would have meant more than a loss to the individual. The death of the nation would have ensued. When citizens are 'greedy, cowardly, faint-hearted, more in love with repose than liberty, they no longer hold out for long against the redoubled efforts of government'. As a result,

sovereignty of the people vanishes, thus the 'majority of states fall and perish before their time' (p.428).

Fourth, the vitality and health of the people's will could be measured not only by its capacity for remaining inalienable, for resisting representation, but also by its indivisibility. Devices were repeatedly found to prevent one class of the population from imposing its own will to the detriment of the common will, to assure, in other words, that the will of the people remained truly collective. From this point of view the *comitia centuriata* were superior to the *comitia curiata* and the *comitia tributa*. Since the populace formed the majority in the assemblies of *curiae*, they were 'suited only to tyranny and evil schemes'. The rural tribes were also absent. The *comitia tributa* were 'the most favourable to popular government', but excluded the senators. Thus forced to obey laws on which they could not vote, the senators were on this point 'less free than the meanest citizens' (pp.451-452). The *comitia centuriata*, which was the most favourable to aristocracy, was at the same time the best of the assemblies, since it alone included all classes of citizens. Rather than in terms of gain for the individual, Rousseau's praise of this assembly stresses the collective ideal and the significance of its fulfillment for the glory of the nation: 'It is clear that the whole majesty of the Roman people lay solely in the *comitia centuriata*' (p.452).

Religion was the fifth essential force contributing through the traditions of Rome's earliest beginnings to the cohesiveness of the community, to the preservation of liberty, to the predominance of her power. Rousseau believes the Romans made better use of religion than do modern nations. Civil in function, it was subordinate to the state. When Caesar pleaded for Catiline, he tried to show that the soul is mortal. In refuting him, Cato and Cicero did not indulge in speculations about the truth or falsity of the dogma, or its relation to individual conscience. They simply pointed out that Caesar's arguments made him a bad citizen, since his doctrine of mortality would harm the nation (p.468). Religion, conceived as instrument of the state and its freedom, helped give

the Roman soldier his dedication to victory. Instead of soldiers fighting for god, as in the Christian tradition, the gods fought for the legions. Romans asked their gods for victory and assumed them to be superior to those of the peoples they attacked (pp.466-467). Afraid of tempting their god, Christians would not dare take an oath to victory, as did the soldiers of Fabius. The Romans, he concludes, could have beaten and crushed most modern Christian nations. Religion in this context is an instrument of free men. It is designed to increase their courage and strength, but leave their minds and hearts untouched by any authority higher than the collective sovereign of which they are a part. Allegiance to an authority higher than the general will would have divided the state and thus diminished Roman vitality and imperial influence. One of Rousseau's main arguments in chapter VIII of the *Social contract* is that civil religion, compatible with liberty as community will, generates national power, whereas Christianity dissipates it.

In large part the life of Rome depended on the integrity of a collective spirit nourished by the individual's participation in legislative and executive functions. The respected leadership of Rome came from rural communities by preference of the collective will. The instruments for expressing this will were present in the form of three principle assemblies. The frequency of their meetings, their assertiveness, and the balancing within them of all classes of the citizenry prevented for a long time the alienation of the people's will through representation and its division by the exclusion of groups. Roman religion, far from perfect because of its proliferation of gods and cults, helped further stabilize the nation. Religious rites, beliefs, and customs, many of which were already embedded in the Roman consciousness by the early institutions of Numa, were handmaid to the aspirations of the state and a potent adjunct to its military spirit. In his presentation, Rousseau has frequently associated these several characteristics of Rome's constitution less with liberty for its own sake than with power and survival: 'preservation' of Rome, the 'growth of its

empire', the impact of its assembled people on the 'fate of Europe', the premature collapse of the state when liberty is lost, the 'majesty of the Roman peoples', the courage of the Roman soldier inspired, yet left united in his allegiance by state religion, Rome 'mistress of the world'.

These positive principles of Roman political structure, instruments of liberty which yielded tremendous power, were sometimes inadequate to the nation's need. Rousseau's emphasis on the threefold relationship, liberty, power, and survival, may be seen again in his willingness to give value to additional devices of Roman democracy, incompatible with liberty standing alone, as the self-sufficiency of a sovereign people, an end in itself, not to be contaminated by extraneous means, but compatible with liberty as a necessary means to power and survival, an instrument to be constantly protected or at times, in moments of crisis, even temporarily removed until circumstances permitted its restoration and the return to normal function. The Roman political machine had its safety controls (censors, tribunes) and emergency alternate system (dictatorship), which supplemented liberty in a goal higher than liberty itself, the goal of maintaining the state in vigorous health. Censorship, with its edicts describing the moral laws, exerted a preventive rather than reformative influence on conduct. Men love good, Rousseau says, but 'it is in determining the good that they make their mistakes'. Rome's two censors, if they curbed freedom's natural course, were still 'useful' in guiding judgment, 'in preserving morality, but not in restoring it' (pp.458-459). The tribunes, closer to the spirit of liberty, but still in violation of its principle of self-sufficient integrity, served as legal defenders who protected the people against unfair treatment by the magistrates. Without any positive right to originate legislation or to execute laws, they could stop all action in the senate and assemblies, 'prevent anything from being done' (p.454). Until they became too powerful, according to Rousseau, the tribunes protected the people by watching, challenging, and obstructing many harsh projects sponsored by the government. In their presence, 'those

proud patricians, who always held the entire people in contempt, were forced to bend' (p.454). The third device, dictatorship, overcame the inflexibility of freedom's laws in times of crisis, when circumstances required their suspension. During the first period of the republic, Rome often resorted to this expedient, because 'the state had not yet a firm enough basis to be able to maintain itself by the strength of its constitution alone' (p.456). Rousseau thinks there was little danger of its abuse in those early times and finds the Romans of the late republic too sparing in its use. They were afraid of dictatorship, but the very weakness of the capital secured it against a dictator, since he could 'defend public liberty', but could never endanger it' (p.457). The real threat was from the armies outside Rome.

Liberty discussed in the context of the nation's power, its health, its survival, as instrument to maintain a competitive posture in relation to other states, even by means at times incompatible with the principle itself, leaves no doubt that liberty, far from being an ideal end, is operational, the life-blood of the state, the essential ingredient permitting the vigorous function of all the organs of the nation. Loss of liberty in fact usually means the death of the country. Examples of rejuvenation are exceptions which 'could not even occur twice for the same people', for a nation cannot free itself if the 'civil force is worn out' through sophistication. It has happened that liberty may be lost for a period and then, while the state is close to death, in reaction appear again by means of upheaval and revolution to give new life to the nation as self-respect returns. Sparta went through such a crisis and subsequent renewal under Lycurgus. After the tyranny of the Tarquins, which made the Romans 'a stupid populace', the state after a time of violence arose again stronger than ever in its spiritual and physical strength. Rome was 'born again, so to speak, from its ashes' and resumed 'the vigour of its youth on leaving the arms of death' (p.385, *Contrat social*). The fatal encroachments of Roman rulers on the people's sovereignty, their efforts also to narrow the base of government, are a part of history. The force

of the nation increased or diminished in direct proportion to the rise or decline of liberty: 1. the mixed government of Romulus 'degenerated promptly into despotism'; 2. the true period of the birth of the republic, the expulsion of the Tarquins, was followed by a mixed government combining aristocratic and democratic features and then by the genuine democracy of the tribunes; 3. from this democracy, the natural movement toward limiting the number involved in government began with a change to aristocracy; abuses led to civil wars and the triumvirate; Sulla, Julius Caesar, and Augustus became true monarchs; the despotism of Tiberius brought on the dissolution of the state (p.421-422, *Contrat social*).

The relationship of liberty to the nation's total energy, to the swing from growth to decline, from life to death, is never subordinate in Rousseau's analysis of Rome. Liberty is the principle shared by both Sparta and Rome, but enjoyed by the Romans to a higher degree, since they placed liberty above Rome itself. They never believed, according to Rousseau, that 'their homeland could outlive liberty'. It was through this vitalizing, power-yielding belief that Rome in the years of ascendency was triumphant over all of her enemies (p.543, *Parallèle entre Sparte et Rome*).

The Romans excelled in matching their laws to growing corruption in the populace, but the downfall could not be postponed indefinitely (pp.452-453). The Roman state had a flaw determined by its physical condition and inherent in its institution, that of being the 'only disciplined people in the midst of barbarians' who attacked them: 'they became the masters of the world by defending themselves'. A people wishing to remain free cannot be a conquering nation, but war for them was 'a necessary remedy' (p.1013, *Gouvernement de Pologne*). They were forced into conquest. Their foreign policy therefore had to presuppose a perpetual state of war.

The danger in this position was not apparent so long as Roman character remained intact. The embattled position of the Romans

for a long time reinforced their cohesiveness, military prowess, and love of liberty. Liberty generated the power which permitted continuing success. But with their victories and expansion throughout the Mediterranean came the corrupting influence of other civilizations. Marked degeneracy began under Ennius and Terence. With Ovid, Catullus, Martial, and 'that crowd of obscene authors whose names shock decency', its low point had been reached. Once the 'temple of virtue', Rome was now the 'theatre of crime, the shame of all nations, and the plaything of barbarians'. In the very period when the title of arbiter of taste was given to Petronius, Rome, formerly the capital of the world, fell 'under the yoke she had imposed on so many other nations' (p.10, *Science et arts*).

Some of the Romans had recognized the symptoms of decay and tried to remove the disease. Rome became great through its simplicity, its moderation, its assemblies, through its senate of 'two hundred virtuous men, worthy of ruling Rome and of governing the earth'. Now pomp, frivolous eloquence, and elegance were the standards of excellence. Absorbed by vain talents, the people lost 'the sole talent worthy of Rome', that of 'conquering the world and of making virtue reign in it'. The Romans had shed their blood in Greece and Asia in order to 'enrich architects, painters, sculptors, and actors'. Simplicity was replaced by splendour, manliness by effeminacy (pp.14, 15).

This new outward orientation opened the way to an attack on the people's sovereignty. Distracted by thirst for goods and money, citizens became the victims of magistrates who now rivaled one another for wealth and power. Intent on building their own authority, they encouraged the people to look more and more to the nation's borders. War, formerly a defensive measure, became a means to divert the populace from its jealous preoccupation with liberty as self-rule. A vicious circle was begun. As the state grew larger through conquest, its 'expenses became proportionately heavy and burdensome'. Each province had to contribute to the general financial burden. Fortunes through profiteering were

made in one place and spent in another, so that the former beneficial balance between production and consumption was broken. One city could become rich at the expense of several country areas. As a result, confidence in national policy was shaken. Citizens became reluctant to defend the homeland, and the magistrates encouraged this attitude. It gave them an excuse for hiring more soldiers, whose real function was to keep rebellious citizens under control.

The movement away from cohesiveness by character toward the submissive unification gained by applying police pressure explains for Rousseau the situation in Rome under the emperors. Marius, the first to dishonour the legions, used freed men, vagabonds, and other mercenaries during the war of Jugurtha. Assembling such troops to suppress citizens, the rulers claimed loudly that their purpose was to 'contain the foreigner' (pp.268-269, *Economie politique*). With loyalties only to Caesar, who paid them, blindly obedient soldiers held the Romans in check by the threat of 'raised daggers'. Farmers were next drafted from the land to serve in the army. As the labour supply was diminished, production declined, while the maintenance of troops increased taxes. When the people rebelled, the tyrants again multiplied the number of troops (p.269). The practice of increasing the army at the expense of agriculture was repeated many time until the economy was ruined.

From simplicity and liberty, to conquest, sophistication, enslavement, economic ruin, and impotence was a long and complicated journey for Rome, but the originating cause, which triggered all of these events and changes, was her physical circumstance, her need to survive by conquest. The 'irons of the Romans were not forged in Rome, but in the armies, and it was by their conquests that they lost their liberty' (p.880, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*; pp.1016-1017, *Gouvernement de Pologne*).

Surrounded by enemies more powerful than herself, Rome maintained, then expanded her borders by dint of an enduring cohesiveness and pride built on religious tradition, military

valour, love of law, dedication to family, homeland, and liberty. Uppermost among these virtues for Rousseau was Roman love of liberty, construed as respect for each citizen's life and fierce devotion to his right to participate in the legislative and executive. This liberty is viewed in the collective as well as the individual sense, but more often in terms of the community spirit it fostered than of the private rights it preserved. It is made synonymous with national vigour, power, and predominance. The organs of government, vehicles or instruments of the people's will, assured for a time freedom and also great power and glory for Rome. Her free assemblies voted decrees which had an impact throughout Europe. The Roman talent is called the talent of ruling the universe and establishing virtue in it. At the end, the same environment of hostility which built Roman liberty and power brought Rome to her knees. New conquests accentuated a degenerative luxury and generals, long absent from Rome and wanting tyrannical rule, brought spiritless citizens to heel with mercenary armies. Her liberty lost, Rome was overrun by the barbarians always on her frontiers.

Nations in Africa, America, and Asia, important in themselves for the lessons in physical and moral determination they offered, were for Rousseau largely moulded by international pressures and conflicts, by their responses to these stimuli in terms of national character, customs, beliefs, and institutions. In ancient Europe, Sparta and Rome elicited from him even greater respect. Both nations illustrated convincingly the effects of physical and moral causation. Spartan love of country, which transcended every other principle, and her love of conquest were in part products of hostile environment, powerful, encircling enemies. Rome owed her periods of liberty, glory, and decadence to her need to conquer in order to survive. Both nations with integrity and discipline for a long time succeeded in resisting attack and turning events to their own advantage, Sparta mainly by force of patriotism, Rome more successfully by the power generated from her free collective will.

Love of country, the major sentiment of the Spartans, was essentially attachment to a locality, to the land, soil, hills, plains, and valleys of the homeland, with all of the communal ways, manners, and memories they evoked. Roman liberty, on the contrary, was for Rousseau an active intellectual and emotional sharing of responsibility, the participation by each citizen in the community's voice, a vigorous, purposeful phenomenon which, living in and through the people, relating to its past traditions, customs, beliefs, and history, explains for him Rome's success in imposing her goals, policies, and law throughout Europe. In the past, writers have stressed Rousseau's attention to the features of Rome's constitution which permitted popular sovereignty to endure. Our object has been rather to observe Rome in the international context, to show that he conceived her liberty, not in a vacuum and only as an end in itself, but rather very often as the instrument to survival and overwhelming power.

Modern Europe

Doubt and pessimism are reflected in Rousseau's earliest remarks about modern Europe and persist in the statements he made late in life. Unlike Rome, the nations of Europe, founded in confusion, did not have simple, rustic beginnings. They were also more vulnerable from the start to foreign cultural influence. First, Europe had entered during the period after the fall of the Roman Empire into a state 'worse than ignorance'. Pseudo-science, the 'scientific jargon' of the schools, passed for knowledge until the fall of Constantinople brought the arts and sciences of ancient Greece to Italy, then to France (*Pléiade* iii.6; *Sciences et arts*). Second, courageous and poor races, as if by rule, defeat rich countries, but it must be remembered that the characteristics of even hardy nations are subject to contamination from abroad. Rousseau points out the difficulty in a note from the *Discours sur l'inégalité*: 'Today, now that commerce, travel, and conquest bring the various nations closer together and their ways of living

are continually made more and more similar by frequent communication, it can be seen that certain national differences have diminished' (p.208). The Franks conquered the Gauls, the Saxons conquered England, the Swiss resisted Austria and later Burgundy, the English broke the power of Philip II (p.20, *Sciences et arts*). Yet the French of his day, for example, no longer resemble the Gauls described by Roman historians. The modern Italians are not at all like the Romans. The fact that nations absorb one another's weaknesses, no nation in Europe being 'shut up by itself', has serious implications, because the predominant nations, Spain, France, England, which cannot 'last long', are far down the road to decadence (*Lahure* ii.166, 424-425; *Emile*). Their corrupting influence is therefore constant. Because of the impact of learning and this inevitable cross-fertilization of national traits, little promise exists for most of the nations of Europe. If there is any hope for a healthy national life under these conditions, it lies, Rousseau believes, with three small states, Geneva, Corsica, and Poland.

Rousseau believes that in many respects Geneva is to be envied. Her boundaries, rights, and security are guaranteed by honourable treaties. Wars and conquerors no longer threaten the state's tranquillity. Because of a protected location, the price of liberty is not high. Her constitution is basically sound. Laws, made for the most part by a sovereign people, are usually well administered by worthy magistrates elected by the people. The character of the citizens is not yet seriously endangered. Although they profit by selling manufactures throughout Europe, the great wealth which induces softness is largely absent. Nor is the country so poor as to be dependent on foreign countries (*Pléiade* iii.113, 115; *Inégalité* [*Dédicace*]).

If there is some increase in influence from abroad, certain customs do not change: 'they relate, you might say, to the soil, the climate, and to various needs'. Living less in cities and villages than the French, scattered more evenly over the countryside, the people have brought the signs of civilization, steeples, flocks,

manufactures, to all parts of the land, so that forests, rocks, mountains, even the precipices seem to be alive, to assume the quality of animation, to breathe 'liberty and well-being' (*DP* ix.7-8; à m. le maréchal de Luxembourg, 20 janvier 1763). Dwelling in isolation, a bookdealer on Mount Chasseron may carry on business very well (*Pléiade* i.1072; *Rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, 1776-1778). The beauty of the country-side, attaching the mind and heart to the nation, fills each citizen with a love of country not found in France in spite of all its commodities and pleasures. The French have no native song so joined to their love of homeland that its melody touches them to the depths of their being, a phenomenon which occurs often among the Swiss residing in a foreign country and accounts for the royal ordinance against playing the song of the cowherds to the Swiss troops. Love of country, poignantly stirred by this song through a thousand ideas and images, has caused vigorous soldiers to die (*DP* ix.11).

If patriotic sentiment is one of the great strengths of the people, other characteristics, too, help predict their actions. 'Just, obliging, charitable, solid friends, brave soldiers', they are inclined also to intrigue, distrust, jealousy, inquisitiveness, miserliness. Avarice 'more than their simplicity' may often restrain their taste for luxury. They are 'usually serious and flegmatic, but furious in anger, and their joy is like intoxication'. Shrewder than the French in business, the latter repeatedly underestimate them because of their accent. As a result, the very cunning negotiators the French Court sends to Geneva are usually outmanœuvred. Given Swiss admiration for integrity, the best political stratagem is to send a person who is 'true and firm'. The marquis de Bonnac, a clever, crafty man, could accomplish nothing. The *maréchal* de Bassompierre, known for his honesty, succeeded in his mission (*DP* ix.12).

Integrity is evidenced, too, in the people's willingness to serve the state. They do not pay others to take their place, whether as soldiers, officers, magistrates, or workers. They are 'always

ready to pay with their person' (*Pléiade* iii.1010-1011; *Gouvernement de Pologne*). Military service is a regularly established part of life. At the time of marrying, each citizen receives a uniform, 'which becomes his wedding suit', a rifle, and all the equipment required by infantrymen. He is then officially enlisted in the company of his own quarter. A member of the militia, he spends Sundays and holidays during the summer in military training. He receives no pay for this duty while he remains within his own quarter, since his work is only slightly interrupted. But if he is called to serve elsewhere, he is paid by the state. No one can send another in his place. Each is obliged to train and become an efficient protector of the country (p.1015).

Comfort may be taken in the conditions and qualities which favour Geneva, but there is cause for uneasiness and fear. First, Rousseau regrets that the people want to reduce the authority of their magistrates by participating more themselves in the administration of civil affairs and in the execution of laws, two innovations which would mean a return to the 'crude constitution of the first governments just emerging from the state of nature', flaws which helped ruin Athens. After appointing 'respected magistrates' and assigning them to well identified departments, individual citizens should be satisfied with 'giving sanction to laws' and deciding the most important public affairs 'in assembly and under the guidance of their leaders' (pp.114-115, *Inégalité* [*Dédicace*]).

A second danger lies at the other extreme in actions taken to limit the general council and increase the powers of the council of twenty-five or little council through the *Règlement de l'illustre médiation* (p.1675). The general council is not just an organ established by law. It is not the deputy of anyone. It is 'sovereign' and the 'living and fundamental law which gives life and force to all the rest and knows no other rights than its own'. It is not 'an order in the state', but the 'state itself'. Yet article III of the *Règlement* limits the power of the general council (p.826, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*). Article II provides for the syndics to be

chosen exclusively from the council of twenty-five. This limitation is contrary to the very purpose of the syndics, who are elected for two reasons, to judge the people, to protect the people. Serving for one year, the syndics are supposed to guard against, not sympathize with the possible encroachments proposed by the life members of the council of twenty-five, a council the people does not choose (pp.824-825). The difficulty runs deep, because the efforts of the government to make its power absolute are plain. The council of twenty-five is 'minister and police, prosecutor and judge at the same time: it gives orders and executes; it issues summons, it seizes, it imprisons, it judges, it punishes all by itself; it has the power at hand to do everything' (pp.875-876). Because of the council's predominance, any paid official of the state is not really a citizen. He is from the date of his appointment 'the slave and satellite of the twenty-five and ready to trample under foot the homeland and the laws as soon as they [the twenty-five] order it to be done'. 'As individuals', the citizens and bourgeois of Geneva are slaves of 'an arbitrary power', slaves of twenty-five despots. At their lowest point, the Athenians had thirty. But even twenty-five is inaccurate, because only nine members are needed to issue a 'civil judgment' and thirteen to render a 'criminal judgment' (pp.835, 879).

Rousseau's final concern is that the Genevans may become too preoccupied with wealth. Dedication to profit corrupts first the values of the very rich, then of the very poor, who become cynical. The middle class, the clock-makers of Geneva, would be affected last (*DP* iv.143; à Tronchin, 26 novembre 1758). But such decay, he feels, is imminent. The Genevans settle in all parts of Europe. Unable to continue their simple ways, they soon succumb to the prevalent vices, even imitate the lofty manners of foreign nobles. When they return, they bring back wealth and newly acquired needs and affectations. Worshipping luxury, they 'scorn their time-honoured simplicity', no longer respect liberty: 'they forge for themselves irons of silver, not as chains, but in the form of ornaments' (*Pléiade* ii.658; *Nouvelle Héloïse*). Because of such

changes, Rousseau at times fears the 'public force' may be 'worn out'. Abuses seem inevitable: 'State aud customs have perished; nothing can give them new life'. If there are still good citizens, 'their generation is dying and the generation which follows will not provide any' (*DP* viii.149; à Pictet, 23 septembre 1762).

Geneva by physical setting and location is for Rousseau in a relatively secure position from her neighbours, most of whom have more interest in preserving than destroying her. The original character of the people, reflecting her isolation, climate, and soil, gives unity to the state. The attitude and policies of her leaders are in many ways admirable. Yet this favourable moral condition is threatened by a second physical circumstance, the proximity of sophisticated neighbours on her borders, the source of new ways and attitudes affecting both leaders and people. Usurpations by magistrates eager for power endanger specific individual rights and the integrity of the nation's collective will. Travel and trade, wearing away national character, are imposing on the Swiss a European stamp. The full meaning of Rousseau's objection to establishing a theatre at Geneva can be seen only in this atmosphere of impending general disintegration. For him the stage, its actors, actresses, its cynical plays, are symbolic of the many evils sapping the nation of its vitality.

With similar problems, in an even more beleaguered position, the Corsicans, Rousseau believes, may learn from Genevan attitudes and policies and prove fertile ground for new legislation. In spite of Genoa's opposition, including the insidious efforts to establish an academy to corrupt them, they have a remarkable ability to 'recover and defend liberty'. They must be studied and taught to preserve freedom by positive law. He believes someday 'this small island will astonish Europe' (*Pléiade* ii.967; *Narcisse* iii.391; *Contrat social*). When, however, Buttafuoca extends him an invitation in 1764 to write its constitution, Rousseau is hesitant, because the French the year before had occupied three of the Genoese fortresses on Corsica. Since Buttafuoca seems to view their presence calmly and Genoa is no longer to be

feared, Rousseau finds reason for optimism, but warns that the island's independence is not assured 'so long as no power gives it recognition'. He is reluctant to write legislation which may never be used (*DP* xi.299; à M. Butta-Foco, 22 septembre 1764). His outline of the information he needs does reveal in a subsequent letter the approach to the project he intends to use.

He makes numerous requests concerning geography and resources: a map with districts named and delineated; a description of the entire island, its natural history, products, cultivated lands, its division into districts; the number, size and location of its cities, towns, and parishes; as close an estimate of the population as possible; the status of the fortresses and ports; its industry and arts, its navy, trade, and potential for commerce. He asks questions related to social structure: size and influence of the clergy, its teachings, its attitude toward the homeland; the number of old families, of privileged groups, the existence of a nobility. His study requires data about municipal rights and the will of the cities to safeguard them; national behaviour, including the customs of the people, their taste, occupations, amusements; the features of the military establishment, chain of command, divisions, discipline, manner of warfare. Finally, he wants to learn more about the history of the nation to the present, its laws, statutes, current government, difficulties of administration, the practice of justice, the sources of public income, methods of levying and collecting taxes, the amount of the people's contribution, what they pay annually. His aim in collecting data about the physical, social, behavioural, and institutional aspects of the nation is to find the 'national genius' (*DP* xi.351-354; à M. Butta-Foco, 1764).

This interest in background does not mean he proposes simply to adjust government to the people's weaknesses as well as to its strengths. A wise method may be to 'form the government for the nation'. There is, however, 'a much better way, forming the nation for the government' (*Pléiade* iii.901; *Constitution pour la Corse*, 1765). Vigorous and healthy, Corsica can 'give itself to

the government which will maintain its vigour and health' (p.902). The existing effects of climate, geography, and previous history are not to be passively accepted. Rousseau introduces the more creative idea of calculating cause and effect relationships between land, people, and government.

Two observations immediately seem valid. Corsica requires the 'least expensive' government possible, because she is poor. The government should be suited to agriculture, 'the only occupation which can preserve for the Corsican people the independence it has acquired and give to the nation the solidarity it needs'. The least expensive administration is democracy, which also encourages the equal distribution of people over the land and is therefore favourable to agriculture. Because of the size of the island, however, a strict democracy, 'suitable only to a small city rather than to a nation', is not appropriate. Corsica needs a 'mixed government in which the people is assembled only by parts', in which, since representation is necessary, 'the guardians of power are often changed' (pp.906-907).

To accomplish these aims, certain 'prejudices' must be destroyed. The efforts of Genoa to ruin Corsican commerce should be recognized as a blessing, since absence of trade favours the liberty which accompanies an agricultural economy. The cantons into which Genoans have divided Corsica for the sake of levying tyrannical taxes may be seen now as a convenient device for establishing democracy in an 'entire people which cannot assemble all at once in the same place' (p.908). These same cantons will help reduce the influence of cities. The Genoans have also worked to abolish the nobility. This undertaking, in spite of Corsican respect for position and rank, must be completed. A feudal order is contrary to equality, which is to be the fundamental law of Corsica's institution (pp.909-910).

Other prejudices in favour of cities and capitals must be opposed. Municipal privileges should be swept away. Corsica needs 'less a capital than a chief town' (p.912). Rousseau selects Corte, centrally located, far from the sea and 'the affluence of

foreigners'. If none of the public offices are made hereditary, officials will not give the city 'that fatal splendour which constitutes the brilliance and ruin of states' (p.913).

In addition to their distrust of cantons, their inclination for commerce, nobility, and cities, the Corsicans, in spite of many virtues, have vices arising from years of servitude. If some of these will fade as their cause is removed, others must be deliberately uprooted. Ferocity will disappear, he thinks, when the Corsicans are united under a just government. But their urge for theft and murder presupposes punishment of misdeeds and the correction of laziness. The positive solution is to attach the people to the soil, teach them the laborious life, how to derive subsistence for themselves and family from the land rather than from crime. The means of inducing them to adopt and love agriculture must be a new system for awarding citizenship, which favours, first, those who originally fought for the republic's liberty and, second, by a definite formula those who establish farms and support families through their labour (pp.914-915, 918).

To avoid great accumulations of wealth, which divide the nation into rich owners and the peasants who work for them, with a resulting loss of incentive for many people and the abandonment of agriculture for more lucrative trades, exchange is to be done by goods as much as possible and the use of money kept to a minimum (pp.919-921, 939). Imports are to be reduced and, whenever possible, eventually produced by the island itself. Only the arts 'useful to agriculture and beneficial to human life' are to be favoured. Sculptors, goldsmiths, and embroiderers are not needed, whereas carpenters, blacksmiths, and weavers are welcome (p.926).

As for finances, the source may be from public domains, from a tax equivalent to the clergy's tithe, or from the *corvée*, as practiced in Switzerland. Taxes should be levied as much as possible on goods and collection made the first step in a public career, a test of integrity, which may permit the deserving to ascend to higher office (p.934). The aim is always to increase

population, to enrich the nation in men rather than money, in active, hardworking citizens dedicated to the homeland, to independence and authority, rather than to riches (pp.904, 915, 938-939).

The basic principles, which determine these particular proposals, are three: take advantage of the natural characteristics of the people and the country; develop and coordinate the strengths peculiar to Corsica; be independent and think no more about foreign nations than 'if there were none' (p.904). The meaning of the third idea should not be misinterpreted. Rousseau's intention is to make the Corsicans 'independent' of external corruption. Every measure he proposes recognizes the existence of the European community and the need to give the Corsicans the character and discipline to resist its influence (p.916). The version of the social pact he proposes for them is an instrument both of domestic solidarity and of resistance to the corrosive effect on national spirit of the foreign policies of Genoa and France: 'In the name of the all powerful God and on the Holy Gospels, by a sacred and irrevocable oath, I join myself in body, goods, will, and all my power to the Corsican nation in order to belong to it exclusively and absolutely, myself and everything that depends on me. I swear to live and die for her, to observe all of her laws, and to obey her legitimate chiefs and magistrates in everything that is in conformity with the laws. May God thus assist me in this life and have mercy on my soul. Long live the liberty, the justice, and the Republic of the Corsicans. Amen' (p.943). He warns that the decline of these precious virtues in Geneva are in direct proportion to the people's submissiveness to foreign values (pp.915-916).

Just as important, liberty in the context of the oath means ability to resist foreign oppression. Each Corsican twenty-one years old or more who takes the oath will be 'without differentiation' inscribed as a citizen in the highest class of the nation: 'It is very just that all those valiant men who have delivered their nation at the price of their blood should enter into possession of

all those advantages and enjoy to the highest degree the liberty which they have won for it' (p.919).

Unfortunately, the fate of the country was soon sealed from abroad by France. Genoa, recognizing it had lost control, signed on 15 May 1768 a treaty selling her rights. Meeting Corsican resistance with force, the French were victorious by 1769. The island became a dependency of the crown the following year. Rousseau abhors France's 'ignominious' rôle. He saw Corsica as a rising nation, 'a people being born', which had been conquered by French gold after iron had failed (*DP* xix.256-257; à M. de Saint-Germain, 26 février 1770).

Writing Corsica's constitution, Rousseau was deeply troubled by a major physical circumstance determining her fate, the coercion to which she had been subjected in the past by Genoa, the political and military pressures used against her in the present by France. He recognized, too, in her customs, institutions, and national character many features more borrowed from Europe than related to her own climate, soil, and early traditions. His recommendations, adapted to environment, at the same time read like antitheses to European influence: preference for democracy and agriculture; opposition to nobility, cities, capitals, commerce, finance, great fortunes, academies; somewhat futile reliance on the principle of liberty to oppose a conscienceless invasion by Choiseul's troops.

In his counsels to Poland, as in those to Geneva and Corsica, Rousseau emphasizes liberty and patriotism. Poland, in spite of defeats, years of oppression and anarchy, still has the 'fire of youth', the will to ask for a new government and new laws, as if she 'were only now being born'. In her irons she has the strength to discuss the 'means of preserving her liberty' (*Pléiade* iii.954; *Gouvernement de Pologne*). Building on the soundness of her character, he hopes to give to the entire nation the 'soul of the confederates' of Bar, to fill the hearts of the Poles with their republic. Virtue as liberty and patriotism must be of a fiber to resist any attempt to impose Russian ways and manners.

Rousseau's reforms, concerning education, economy, government, defense, are means to liberty, survival, and power.

Through education, additional bonds may be found to attach each citizen to the homeland. Assembling in a temple for 'a cult which has nothing national about it' does not form a people. Citizens must share traditions meaningful only to them: religious ceremonies, games which bring them frequently together, drills which train them, activities which 'increase not only their vigour and strength, but also their pride in themselves and in one another' (p.958). Laws establishing such practices inspire a nation's people. The entertainment customary in the courts of Europe, cards, plays, and operas, which turn men effeminate, distract them, and make them 'forget their homeland and duty', should be discouraged. Preference must be given to simple and active amusements 'open to all classes'. They might be spectacles in the open air resembling the bullfights which have contributed in no small way to 'maintain a certain vigour among the Spanish people'. Rousseau also recommends reviving the circuses in which Polish youth used to participate. In such contests, future leaders prove their superiority to compatriots they must command later in life. By seeing patriotism rewarded publicly, the Poles may learn to give themselves altruistically rather than to seek advantage in wealth and profit: 'this is the art of ennobling souls and making of them an instrument more powerful than gold' (pp.962-963).

Luxury must be made an object of scorn. It is a neutralizing agent which makes all Europeans alike. Rousseau regrets that a young Frenchman, Englishman, Spaniard, Italian, and Russian are basically the same person. Formed by similar training, they are devoted to licentiousness. Education must give to the Poles a different mold, a character 'patriotic by inclination, by passion, by necessity'. They should be taught everything there is to know about their country: its products, provinces, roads, cities, history, heroes, laws. Physical training should occupy an important place. 'The most important part of education', it forms 'healthy and

robust temperaments', helps 'prevent vices from springing up'. As a result of these precepts and others comprising a strict regime in character formation, each person will be first a citizen and only secondarily a member of some trade or profession (pp.966-968).

The economic system is to complement the formation of national character. Manufacture and trade are to be discouraged. An acquisitive, competitive spirit is the effect, not the cause of such enterprises: 'have disciplined troops, fortresses, academies, and above all a good financial system which causes money to circulate, thus multiplies it, and acquires a lot of it for you; work to make this system very necessary in order to keep the people very dependent and for that purpose encourage material luxury and its inseparable counterpart, luxury as a state of mind. In this way, you will form a people given to intrigue, an energetic people, greedy, ambitious, servile, rascally, like all the others'. Accepted by the family of European nations, the Poles will then be forced because of their interests into the system of negotiations and alliances, into the game of conquering or being conquered: 'No war in Europe will be waged without your having the honour of being pushed into the thick of it'.

Rousseau recommends a very different course. Legislators should strive to apply the people 'to agriculture and to the arts necessary to life, to make money contemptible and if possible useless, to seek out and find more powerful and certain incentives for accomplishing great things'. Then the 'Russians and others will no longer come to play the rôle of masters in your country, and if for their own misfortune they should come, they will be much more in a hurry to leave' (pp.1003-1004).

As for the plan to sell the ancient fiefs or starosties, it is an outgrowth of the idea that money is everything in politics and war. Money cannot be 'the nerve of war', since rich nations always succumb to poorer peoples. Financial systems are modern, but nothing great or good comes from them. Money at the most supplements men: 'Poles, leave all of that money to others, or be satisfied with what they will have to give you, since they need

your wheat more than you need their gold'. By cultivating their fields, the Poles can earn enough money to buy all the oil and wine they need. A 'good economic system' is not 'a system of finance and money'. Poland needs 'minds, hearts, and arms'. Those make the 'strength of the state and the prosperity of a people' (pp.1004-1005, 1007-1009, 1015-1016).

Concerning government, Rousseau finds numerous changes basic, but not immediately practicable. Before the government can be effectively reformed, the territory of Poland must be severely reduced: 'your vast provinces will never permit the severe administration characteristic of small republics'. The only alternative is to extend the federative principle and form in Poland a system of thirty-three closely associated states, one for each palatinate (pp.971, 1010, 1788). In spite of obvious difficulties, the social order must be changed to give the bourgeois and the people more rights. At present the nobles are 'everything', the bourgeois 'nothing', and the peasants 'less than nothing' (p.972). Poland can never be free so long as many of its people are enslaved. The task is arduous because of the self-interest and prejudices of the masters, the vice, cowardice, and ignorance of the people. It is necessary 'to free their souls', form them for citizenship, before trying to free 'their bodies' (pp.972-974).

Rousseau insists, too, that nothing should be hereditary except the nobility. If the prince were made hereditary, his surveillant, the senate, would also have to be hereditary to have strength enough to check the crown. The controlling power, including the treasury, would pass to king and senators; the sovereignty of the equestrian order would be subverted (pp.993-994).

Safeguards against this threat to equality must be found in a judicious balancing of the legislative branch of government against the executive according to a definite formula: power must be in direct proportion to the size of the membership of each body and in inverse proportion to duration of office. Accordingly, the house of nuncios, the most numerous, will be the most powerful, but its members will leave office at short intervals. Frequent

rotation of membership and frequent meetings will help prevent this organ, the principal legislative body, from being subverted by senate and prince (pp.978, 993).

Following the same formula, the king, who is elected for life, is to have great powers for inspection, but very restricted powers for legislation and administration. The limitation of his reign to the duration of his life prevents the natural trend toward arbitrary power, since the gains made by each king are lost as his term comes to an end. His successor, named by the equestrians, must again submit to the full restrictions imposed by the fundamental laws of the nation (pp.975-976, 991, 994).

Finally, according to the formula, the senate, which is less numerous than the house of nuncios, will have less control over legislation than that house. Its powers over administration, however, will be greater. Part of its membership will have relatively short terms of office, but as a counterweight to the king, part will serve for life (pp.993-994). Rousseau believes the king should have some say in the nomination of members of the senate, but his present right to name its members is excessive and could gradually weaken the curbing effect the senators have on the executive (p.989).

The great danger, the built-in inclination which could spell the death of Polish liberty is, in Rousseau's opinion, the nation's trend toward a hereditary executive: 'The Poles have always been inclined to pass the crown from father to son or to the nearest relative by inheritance, although always by right of election' (p.992). A hereditary crown could never be sufficiently subordinate: 'Poland is free, because each reign is preceded by an interval during which the nation, entering again into all of its rights and recapturing a new vigour, cuts back the advance of abuses and usurpation, a period in which legislation rises again and regains its initial energy' (pp.991-992).

Contributing causes to anarchy in Poland are in Rousseau's opinion the *liberum veto*, the confederation, and 'the abuse which individuals have made of the right to have soldiers in their service'

(p.994). The last practice must be abolished. The *liberum veto* is not, he finds, 'vicious in itself' (p.995). By natural law, unanimity 'was required for the formation of the political body and the fundamental laws which are related to its existence'. The same unanimity should be required for the abrogation of such laws. On such matters the *liberum veto* may continue to function. Reform should come in the direction of 'carefully weighing and meditating the capital issues which will be established as fundamental laws' (p.996). The veto should concern only those problems and never be allowed to obstruct the other administrative and legislative business of the Diet.

At times, Poland, like Rome, has found a need for extraordinary measures to preserve the security of the nation. The confederation or union of her noblemen into an executive and military force has been to her what the dictatorship was to Rome, but dictatorship, contrary to Roman legislative and governmental genius, finally helped destroy the government, whereas in Rousseau's opinion the federative device by 'silencing the laws' in moments of emergency has been for Poland a safeguard to liberty. As in the question of the veto, the answer is not to abolish the instrument, but to determine when it may be used (pp.998-999).

Through education, a goods-based economy, the balancing of governmental organs, the wise use of veto and confederation, the future Poland can be better unified and more stable. It can be 'warlike' in the defense of liberty against its own prince and against the designs of its neighbours. The nation must not engage in plans for conquest itself, for 'whoever wants to take away the liberty of others ends almost always by losing his own: that is true even for kings and much more true for peoples' (p.1017). Poland must not rely on allies too much, but a twenty-year treaty with Turkey will help curb Russia. The Poles have an advantage, Rousseau thinks, in the interest other European nations have in keeping Poland a buffer between themselves and Russia. In preserving militarily her liberty against foreigners, the state should initiate methods appropriate to terrain and manpower. Poland's

strength lies more in cavalry than infantry. Her tactics must emphasize speed, lightness, the ability to divide, scatter, and reassemble without confusion. The Poles must specialize in sham warfare, 'in the art of inundating a country like a torrent, reaching everywhere, and never being caught, acting always in concert although separately, cutting communications, intercepting convoys, attacking rear guards, removing advance guards, surprising detachments, harassing large groups which march and camp together'. Fortresses must be avoided, because tyrants can use them against their own people. Truer fortresses must be in the hearts of a people's citizens (pp.1017-1018).

Keenly aware of the dangers of Polish anarchy, Rousseau still fears over-centralization under hereditary monarchy more than instability. He therefore stresses counterweights to the executive and only modification, not abolishment, of the *liberum veto* and of the federative principle, both of which he sees as part of the spirit of liberty and equality he wants to preserve and strengthen in Poland. Cohesiveness and security are to come from common traditions, from a civil system stressing merit, and from a programme for economic reform. If dismemberment through partition should occur, this sad reduction in size may nevertheless prepare the way to more efficient administration (p.971). Avoiding the balance of power politics which has drained her resources in the past, Poland must look only to her own defenses, perfect the hit and run tactics of the cavalry. Poland's unfortunate physical reality is that she is 'a large state surrounded by still more powerful states, which by despotism and military discipline have a great offensive force. Feeble in contrast by her anarchy, she is in spite of Polish valour subject to every kind of outrage' (p.959).

Rousseau's very specific comments on Geneva, Corsica, and Poland have often been studied for the contribution they make to an understanding of his theories on civil liberty. Our own purpose, after examining again his writings on these nations, has been to underscore the fact that his recommendations reveal an

almost obsessive preoccupation with the external pressures operating on the state. Usurpations by Geneva's council of twenty-five, by the Corsican nobility, by a possible hereditary king of Poland are feared by Rousseau certainly as blows to individual right, but even more for their weakening effect on each nation's collective will, therefore on the state's capacity for survival.

If Corsica has already fallen, if the existence of Geneva and Poland is jeopardized by their increasing sophistication as well as by the designs of France, England, and their allies, the source of these dangers, Rousseau knows, lies ultimately in causes behind the power situation in Europe. Competing in Africa, America, and Asia, the great countries of the European system of equilibrium had extended that continent's values and antagonisms to the entire world. Rousseau's references to Venice, Spain, the Empire to Prussia, Russia, France, Holland, and England usually stress the determinants of their domestic and foreign policies.

To Venice and Italy the rest of Europe owes the arts (*Lahure* vi.183; *Lettre sur la musique française*, 1753). Her practice of making public figures work their way up the ranks produced many great statesmen and should be imitated (*Pléiade* iii.623; *Polysynodie*, 1761). Rousseau's other remarks concern the Venetian government and its relation to the people. One phenomenon of interest to him is that its symbols of rule, long after the state's fall from earlier fortunes, command 'affection and adoration'. The doge is highly honoured. 'Without power, without authority', he is nevertheless sacred, second only to the Pope in the respect paid him. Tradition and ceremony, he concludes, are the bonds which shackle the people emotionally to their leaders in spite of the tyranny which had earlier stifled the more creative forces within them. The Ascension day celebration, during which the doge from his gondola, the Bucantaur, performs the symbolic rite of espousing the Adriatic, would make any good Venetian pour out his blood for the republic (*Lahure* ii.295; *Emile*). The people's enslavement had a largely economic basis. They were slowly

deprived of their voice as power was more and more to the accompaniment of pomp and display concentrated in an aristocracy of the wealthy. This objective, legally attained in 1198 with the *serrar di consiglio*, did not make the government of Venice a true aristocracy. The *libro d'oro*, which assured the careful recording of marriages and births among the ruling caste, established eligibility for posts in the government (iii.983; *Gouvernement de Pologne*). The majority of the nobility in the essentials were as deprived of rights as the commoner. They had no part in the government and were never appointed to the magistracy. For most of the Venetian lords, nobility consisted only in the 'empty title of Excellency and the right to sit in the Great Council'. Because of the numerous membership in this council, the nobles had no more privileges than the plain citizens of Geneva. The power was in the hands of the few, the *patriciate*, comparable to the *bourgeoisie* of Geneva (*Pléiade* iii.421, 441-442; *Contrat social*). Venice illustrate for Rousseau the passage of sovereignty first from a people to their government and then from government by many to government by a few. Numerous ill-conceived and unsuccessful wars with other European powers and the Turks marked the rise of minority interests and the country's decline.

Spain was equally vulnerable to decay because of the misguided policies of a government grown heedless to the interests of the people. With vast domains and riches, with great personal talents, Charles v believed the goal of universal monarchy within his grasp. Philip ii had the same desire for preponderance in Europe, but manœuvred less skilfully. Richer than his father, he was less influential, although his efforts to hold together and expand his empire kept Europe in a state of tension: 'no prince reigned in security, if he did not get along well with Spain'. After Philip ii's death, the decline of the country's fortunes became more evident. Philip iii, as ambitious as his father, was less shrewd. If other nations still by habit believed Spain supreme in Europe, her power had in fact decreased and continued to weaken. The

Netherlands were soon in revolt. Struggles with England used up Spanish reserves. Participation in the civil wars of France was a drain on treasures reaped in the new world. The division of the house of Austria into two branches led to disunity in objectives. Insistent upon consolidating his authority in Germany, the emperor soon alienated most German princes, who formed leagues and 'almost dethroned him'. These events are evidence, for Rousseau, that 'the decadence of the House of Austria' had been prepared 'far in advance'. Spain's ambitions, now thwarted, now renewed, met with diminishing success because of growing opposition from other rising powers, France, Holland, and England. Only time and opportunity were needed for them to break the yoke of her hegemony (iii.596-597; *Jugement sur le projet de paix perpétuelle*, 1756).

The impulse for freedom from Spain was mounted in part by the princes of Germany, whom Rousseau is inclined to see as pivotal in the system of Europe. More solid than negotiations is the fact that the empire, 'almost in the centre of Europe', holds 'all the other parts in respect', thus exerts a stabilizing influence. Very large, it has a great number of separate peoples, each with fine qualities, each with a diversity of loyalties which keeps them from joining together to invade others. They are a treacherous 'reef' for would-be conquerors and vital to maintaining the peace of Westphalia and the balance of power. German public law, which scholars and princes 'study so assiduously', has a broad significance. In a sense it is the law of the continent because of the impact the empire exerts on European politics (p.572, *Paix perpétuelle*).

For one of the princes of the empire, however, he has little admiration. 'Innate love of justice' and a 'secret affection for France' inspire Rousseau's aversion for Frederick II, a man who 'thinks as a philosopher' and 'behaves as a king'. He has abandoned France and reveals by his Machiavelian maxims and conduct that he despises 'natural law' and 'all of the human obligations' (i.591-594, *Confessions*). Like Adraste, king of the Dauniens,

he scorns the gods and seeks to deceive men. In spite of Prussian successes, Rousseau believes Frederick doomed in the long run. Caught up in the rivalries and wars of Europe, he had spurned the opportunities peace gave to build his nation. By restoring the commerce, agriculture, and population of the kingdom, he could have become the arbiter of Europe. No one would have forced him to take up arms again. Unfortunately, he prefers risk and the hope for dubious gains over the welfare of his subjects (pp.599-600).

Rousseau believed that one of Prussia's rivals was also suffering from opportunism, although in a different way. He is contemptuous of Russia's facile acceptance of foreign influence, a fault which prevents her people from having an authentic national character. Peter the great was not an original man. His imitative genius permitted him success in a few good projects, but the damage he has permanently inflicted on the soul of his people far outweighs the advantages of his reforms. Having inherited a nation of barbarians, he immediately set about civilizing them. Rather than encourage the Russians in their natural inclinations, he rushed headlong in his efforts to transform them into Frenchmen, Germans, and Englishmen, thus aborted their true genius and growth. Playing the European game of rivalry and conquest, the Russians want to subjugate Europe and will no doubt be subjugated themselves. The Tartars and their neighbours are destined eventually to become the masters of Russia and of all Europe, the inevitable result of the wars of attrition waged by European powers among themselves (iii.386, *Contrat social*). A Poland of free men, building in peace its own patriotic militia and forgetting wealth, hired troops, and designs for conquest, will in twenty years be more than a match for the Russians, who scorn liberty and believe only in money and the knout (p.1039, *Gouvernement de Pologne*).

Rousseau's frequent expression of love for France makes his testimony concerning her moral and political degradation seem all the more damaging. The French long ago lost their integrity.

They have become 'enemies of virtue and common sense'. The crowd 'grovels in misery; all men are the slaves of vice'. Crimes still not committed 'are already deep in their hearts' and await only the 'assurance of impunity' (ii.969, *Narcisse*). In England, men of commerce and business command respect because of their wealth, influence, and contribution to the national economy. There a 'merchant who proposes to raise troops' is listened to carefully (*Lahure* iii.96; *Lettre à m. de Beaumont*). If merchants and peasants, on the other hand, attempted to lead a rebellion in France, it would be a laughing matter. Any insurrection there without nobles among its leaders is futile. The country favours only valets and masters. Deep moral decay explains her complacency, intolerance, distrust of liberty, her humiliating defeats. Through his detailed account of the traits of her upper classes, he makes France the brilliant symbol and source of corruption in Europe.

The French are on the surface 'good, open, hospitable, and beneficient'. But much in their speech and action is feigned. They value more highly what one says than what one does. They avidly skim the contents of the most recent books, not so much to read them, as to be able to say they have read them. Supple and flexible, they adjust to all comers (*Pléiade* ii.253, 453, 660; *Nouvelle Héloïse*). When with you, they may mean what they say, but they soon forget their earlier attitude. Nothing is permanent in their heart (i.158-160, *Confessions*). Their politeness bewilders a simple man. They ask you to 'count on them' if need arises, to 'make use of my credit, my purse, my house, my carriage'. Property appears of little importance; 'community of goods' seems close to being realized. The opposite is true. In Paris, Saint-Preux writes, wealth is distributed perhaps more unequally than anywhere else in the world. The Parisian's expressions of sympathy for others are mere affectation (ii.232, *Nouvelle Héloïse*).

The bourgeois and lower classes go on foot. The men who think they really count in Paris must have carriage, porter, and butler. They are distinguished mainly for the 'harm they do'. The

theatre seems to exist for the sole purpose of mirroring their habits, manners, and dress. France on the stage 'is inhabited only with counts and chevaliers'. Their absurd actions do not serve to reform the people. 'Always imitative and monkey-like', the latter go to the theatre 'less to laugh' at vices than 'to study' and 'copy' them (pp.252-253). In the face of Parisian artificiality, a sincere man soon learns to 'shut in' his own feelings. The first maxim of the country is 'to do as the others do' (p.250). If he tries to free himself of the prejudices of the day, he finds himself 'crushed' by 'a certain verbiage which very much resembles reasoning' (p.225).

The picture must of course be attenuated by a few who deserve high praise. Catinat and Fénelon were in Julie's words 'the two most virtuous moderns'. Henri IV does not have his superior in virtue and wisdom. France is not the land of free men, but it is the land of true men, and to know the truth is a kind of liberty. The French even tolerate truths that hurt themselves: 'one would be stoned in London if one dared say of the English half of the bad things' the French say of themselves in Paris (p.259). But the faults are none the less real. In Saint-Preux's view, the Parisians turn the entire order of 'natural sentiments' upside down. His own chaste love for Julie would be condemned by women who have no shame at 'soiling the conjugal bed' a hundred times. Adultery is in harmony with the *bienséances*, as husband and wife go their own way, neither expecting to impose any obligation on the other (pp.270-271).

In this world of sham, wit, and artificiality, women control everything: 'nothing is done except through them or for them; Olympus, Parnassus, glory, and fortune, are equally under their laws'. In all business matters they have their way, even over their husbands, not because the latter are their husbands, but because husbands are men, and 'it is agreed that a man will refuse nothing to any woman, even to his own wife' (p.276). 'Frivolous, wileful, cunning, scatterbrained, fickle', Parisian ladies are supposed to speak well, but not think or feel deeply. They usually waste 'all

their merit in a useless chatter'. If for Saint-Preux these characteristics are only exterior, like hoopskirts and rouge, if some of these women are basically often well educated, endowed with human feelings, he still admits they have 'disfigured' their sex: 'I find them a hundred times closer to being men of merit than lovable women' (p.278). Although men in France have accepted the regime established by women, they find it hard to conform to an inactive life. In the salons they pace to and fro, sit down, get up by a 'machine-like instinct', thus try to return to the vigorous life natural to them. In the theatre they stand throughout the performance to make up for their sedentary existence (p.451).

One of the most disturbing aspects of France is its isolation in thought. French books, art, and science have spread over Europe, but a counter movement has not occurred. The French are largely unaware of the ideas and institutions of other countries. Important concepts like natural and international law are virtually unknown there: 'France is so vast a kingdom that the French have the idea the human race ought not to have other laws than theirs. Their parliaments and courts seem to have no conception of natural law and international law'. With all its universities, France does not have one chair in natural law: 'It is the only people in Europe which has looked upon this study as being good for nothing' (*Lahure* iii.95; *Lettre à m. de Beaumont*). In this respect, France does not speak the diplomatic language of Europe.

The religious intolerance practiced so disastrously in France against the Huguenots was, for Rousseau, a gross error. A government should never place itself in a situation where civil war and the bloodshed it entails become inevitable (p.96). An established cult, one which has the 'essential religion', like French protestantism, is not a source of rebellion. Its partisans wanted only to be tolerated and left to live in peace. But when persecuted, the Camisards were left no choice except 'the way of dying'. Despair helped them muster strength and astonish their persecutors. Once this faith had been established in France and had won over a part of the people, there were no legitimate grounds for excluding it.

The edict of Nantes was a contract and required the consent of both parties for annulment (p.95). By the revocation, Louis XIV placed himself despotically above the law. In France and in most monarchies, freedom of any sort is considered the whim of visionaries. French leaders honestly believe it weakens the state. They deliberately encourage liberty in the Empire to reduce its power (*Pléiade* iii.1038; *Gouvernement de Pologne*).

The foreign policy permitted by an irresponsible, isolated, slavish people is usually one of intrigue and war. The effects of favouritism and laxity are evident in the military operations that drain the nation's resources. In Rousseau's opinion, the French soldier is competent. When he believes in his captains, he is 'invincible'. Unfortunately, he must often depend for guidance on court favourites he detests. Informed of the latest intrigues, the officers of enemy armies need only make their attacks coincide with the arrival of a weak leader (ii.586-587, *Nouvelle Héloïse*).

For Voltaire, Diderot, and other *philosophes*, Prussia, Russia, and England are usually vigorous, rising nations, the sometimes enlightened heirs to the earlier predominance of Spain and France in the European system. Holland for them is often the guardian of liberty. Rousseau, on the contrary, has discounted the potential greatness of Prussia and Russia. In a reference to Holland's activities in Cape colony, he stresses what he considers to be the character of the Dutch, 'miserly, patient, hardworking', capable through 'perseverance' of overcoming difficulties which have defeated the heroic efforts of other nations (ii.414. *Nouvelle Héloïse*). He objects to their mercenary attitudes (i.1097, *Rêveries*). He speaks very briefly of their successful use of the confederative principle to resist Austria (iii.427, *Contrat social*). He mentions Dutch freedom only in passing (iii.1038, *Gouvernement de Pologne*). By his frame of values, even the liberty and the emerging power of England are to be downgraded.

In preparing his version of Saint-Pierre's *Paix perpétuelle*, he first wrote that the 'English will have lost their liberty in twenty years', then later sarcastically added to his publisher, Bastide, that

he should have said 'the rest of their liberty, since they are foolish enough to believe they still have it' (*DP* v.299-330, à Bastide, 18 décembre 1760). By that time, too, England will be 'ruined' and its agriculture near exhaustion. Since London is growing, the countryside with its farms must be perishing and the whole kingdom gradually becoming depopulated. The English, who wish to be conquerors, will soon be slaves (*Pléiade* iii.573, *Paix perpétuelle*). Their superiority over the French is more apparent than real. While admitting England's merits, Rousseau stresses nevertheless the people's unwitting surrender of the legislative function.

This generally negative attitude does not substantially change. Rousseau's view is amplified however at times by measured praise for the English nobility. If the English are inhospitable toward strangers, who find it harder there than anywhere else in the world to be 'well received' and to 'advance' in a political career, they in turn do not expect favours in foreign courts (ii.216, *Nouvelle Héloïse*). The English in milord Edouard's words, have the 'most enlightened, best informed, the wisest and bravest' nobility in Europe. They are 'friends of the prince' rather than his slaves, 'leaders' of the people rather than its 'tyrants'. Between people and king they establish 'an invincible balance'. In dealing with a ruler they do not seek to know his will, but rather his right. Their first duty 'is to the nation', their second 'to the one who governs'. 'Supreme ministers of the laws' in the House of lords and sometimes legislators, they render justice to both people and king (p.171). Since the people, Saint-Preux observes, influence government more than in France, a man by gaining public reputation for political ability may advance in a more respectable way (p.263).

Nevertheless, the quality of England's liberty is inferior. Her citizens are hardly more than slaves. This is so, because the people, the true sovereign, has delegated its power to representatives, the members of parliament, which is merely sovereign by law. The operation of this system, a regrettable expedient made necessary

in part by the great size of the nation, offers nevertheless valuable insights. When the king presides over parliament, that body becomes everything. Its function is then distinct from the rôle of each of its chambers considered separately. Including king, lower chamber, and upper chamber, it represents the entire nation. It is the 'unique and supreme power from which each of these three parts draws its existence and its rights'. Vested with the legislative authority, 'it can change even the fundamental law by which each of the orders composing it exists: it can do this, and, moreover, it has done so' (iii.824, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*). The people is truly sovereign, therefore, only when electing the members of parliament. After the election, they return to subservience (p.430, *Contrat social*). This subjection by due process is all the worse, because representatives, if hard to deceive, are easy to corrupt. The greatest blunder of the English is to have 'armed its deputies with the supreme power' and then provided 'no brake to regulate the use they will make of it for the seven full years their commission lasts' (p.979, *Gouvernement de Pologne*). If the members of parliament changed frequently, bribery would be too costly for the Court. Under the present system, it has only to buy the parliament once every seven years to have its way (p.975).

Furthermore, the people's representatives are not absolute in the authority delegated to them. Because of the legislative power of the clergy, there is in effect a division of sovereignty in England. Having made themselves heads of the church, the kings function in religious matters more in an executive than legislative capacity: 'they have acquired less the right of changing the Church than the power of maintaining it. They are not the legislators, but only the princes'. The Anglican clergy, an autonomous body, is both master and legislator (p.463, *Contrat social*).

Within the framework of his strictures, two virtues Rousseau sees in the English parliamentary system are its ability to get things done and its support of law. In spite of the confusion to be expected in a 'body of seven hundred members, everything is anticipated', and this 'great monarchy moves along at a good

rate', a fact remarkable for several reasons: the importance of the matters under discussion, the great number of varying interests in conflict, the cabals competing with one another, the right and opportunity of each member to stand and speak his mind before the assembly (p.831-832, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*). When justice prevails in this country, it is largely, Rousseau believes, because of this great body. Through it the law has such force that the rights of each subject cannot easily be violated. As an example, Rousseau mentions certain printers arrested without proper authorization for printing a satire by John Wilkes against the government. The public complained. The printers had to be released and after taking the magistrates responsible for the action to court were able to win 'immense damages and interests' (pp.875, 1710). A related advantage is that criminal proceedings are conducted openly. As a result, public opinion may come to the aid of the weak, who are not given over 'to the vengeance of the powerful', the error or injustice of the judges does not remain secret, records have less chance of being falsified (i.736-737, *Rousseau, juge de Jean-Jacques*, 1772-1776). Because of parliament, too, the king himself must respect the law. If he tried by the smallest infraction to violate its provisions, he would be without right and power: 'No one would want to obey him'. Even the ministers themselves would 'fear for their heads' in going against parliamentary opinion in such a matter (iii.875, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*).

If the king can influence parliament, he cannot diminish its function in any substantial way. The distribution of power in England amounts to an equal division between king and parliament, a valuable safeguard against usurpation (p.413, *Contrat social*). The king alone convokes and dissolves parliament. He may also reject the laws proposed to him. But his right to convene and adjourn is limited. Within a certain period he must assemble a new parliament, and because of his own need he must keep the members in session most of the time. Each house has its own right to 'propose, treat, discuss, examine the laws and all matters

relating to government.' Because of the authority of parliament, the king's right to make peace and war is 'more apparent than real, at least so far as war is concerned' (pp.877-878, *Lettres écrites de la montagne*). Rousseau finds in England's checks and balances, in spite of its system of representation, some guarantees to liberty that the Genevan constitution does not provide.

Rousseau's hopes for Switzerland, Corsica, and Poland were based largely on his faith in the individual's investment in the nation, the total giving of self and goods which as in early Rome was the source of power. His explanation of the decline of Venice, Spain, and France rests on their abandonment of the principle. They more than England had destroyed within themselves society's motive force. In his prediction of England's ruin, the most serious consideration is moral degradation, basically the loss of liberty as the active participation of citizens in the community or sovereign, which for him means that the foundations of her liberty are unsound, that the outreaching might of her foreign policy is near collapse.

In Rousseau's presentation of the nations of Europe, adversity and destruction in one form or another are the great physical facts overshadowing free, tyrannical, and despotic states alike. Venice, Spain, and France are like shells, their substance of character, liberty, and equality drained from them by domestic misrule and by a foreign policy given to aggression rather than defense. Geneva, Corsica, and Poland do not live in security from the false values prevalent in the cities and capitals of the continent. If they succeed in resisting corrupting influences, they are still subject to the storms of balance of power politics. Though relatively sheltered from both refinement and embroilment by her mountainous environment, Geneva is already showing signs of deterioration in her national character and in the sovereignty of her people. Corsica and Poland, as if they were merely real estate, are being bargained for, bartered, or dismembered by rulers whose right is that of being the strongest. The public law of the empire and the uncompromising independence of many

German principalities are stabilizing factors in Europe, but one member of the empire, Prussia, is involved for high stakes on the battlefield and a major contributor to the general agitation and violence. Russia, deliberately infected by Peter II with the customs of more sophisticated nations and therefore without authentic national character, finds her people the submissive instrument of an aggressive foreign policy. England, so often praised for respecting and protecting individual life, property, freedom of conscience and religion, does not have liberty in the sense of popular sovereignty. Her people, enslaved like those of Spain and France, in a few years will by a policy of conquest have advanced far along the road to moral and physical decline. Suffering like the Spartans from the fatigues of war, they will be outdone by new nations in which the public force is still relatively vigorous.

In the past, writers have stressed Rousseau's analysis of the state as an isolated unit. Yet from his views on some twenty nations and their relations to one another, whether in ancient or modern times, comes a clear message. The nation for him is far from free to seek in isolation the moral perfection of its citizens. It cannot simply relate government to environment and to the temperament of a people in ways which preserve virtue and uproot vice. Relatively small or weak states, the Jewish nation, Sparta, Geneva, Corsica, and Poland, are influenced by external physical pressures and by the moral force of foreign ideas, both of which complicate the physical and moral conditions already operative within their borders. Great states, Egypt, the Arabs, Persians, Greece under Alexander, Rome, the powerful nations of modern Europe, inevitably in their bids for hegemony are ruined by the moral decay which follows upon conquest and by the massive physical resistance of other nations which eventually bleeds an aggressive nation's force.

III

Rousseau's reactions to a few ancient and modern historians and his views about physical and moral causality have guided our study and helped organize his comments on numerous nations of Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. He objects to the localism of most historians of his own day. Unlike the ancients, who seem more capable of allowing facts to speak for themselves, the moderns are blinded by prejudice. Sailors, soldiers, merchants, and missionaries, all of them untrained observers, usually report about the foreign lands they visit only what relates to Europe. Admiring city life, its worship of the symbols of power and prestige, money, spacious buildings, art objects, goods of all kinds, they scorn most alien cultures as barbarous. Another aspect of the same bias is their interest in war, revolution, any obvious sign of political or social upheaval. Since these are the substance of national life at home, they stress the same events in their observations made abroad and almost always neglect any nation which does not exhibit comparable deeds and events of violence and rage. At times, imbued with the *philosophe*'s taste for progress, they may even distort their interpretation of a simple culture in an effort to make it fit their preconception. A final defect appears in the modern historian's descriptions of great personnages. He tends to deal only in appearances. Unlike the ancient writers, who excelled in the revealing detail, he emphasizes in witty portraits the pomp, splendour, and pose of kings and ministers. The intimate words and acts of their private lives, which can tell so much about the hidden personality of an individual and of a people, are sacrificed to a public image. The result of these shortcomings is that the moderns, more than the ancients, have described highly sophisticated, dying nations and have missed their distinctive characteristics. The beginning stages of powerful states are rarely discussed. Nations outside Europe have been neglected. The histories of many simple, vigorous, growing countries remain to be written by trained observers, like Maupertuis or Montesquieu. New

reports on the middle east, the far east, and the north must surpass those by Chardin, Kaempfer, La Condamine, and by some of the Jesuits. For the moderns just mentioned, Rousseau has qualified praise. Principally through them and several ancient historians, he has gained concerning little known lands and famous nations of the past and present at least sufficient knowledge to permit his own insights about their strengths and weaknesses, about their relationships to one another.

From Rousseau's views on history and the descriptions of nations which have been assembled from his statements, the evidence is convincing that he deliberately sought through study a liberating displacement in time and space. This was not, however, an abdication of his own century. In a sense his attitude is analogous to that of Saint-Preux, who, during his voyages and after a storm has stranded the crew on the island of Tinian, expresses love of solitude, regret for being separated from Julie, his wonder at the fatal desperation with which men seek again the bonds of civilization: 'I came upon a second abandoned island more unknown, still more charming than the first [Juan Fernandez], and on which the cruellest kind of accident almost confined us forever. I was the only one perhaps whom so sweet an exile did not frighten; am I not from now on an exile wherever I am? I saw in this delightful and fearsome place what human industry can attempt in order to remove civilized man from a solitude in which he lacks nothing and immerse him again in an abyss of new needs' (*Pléiade*, ii.414, 1584; *Nouvelle Héloïse*). Rousseau's unfettering, time-transcending concern with non-European cultures, with more vigorous societies, Sparta and Rome, ends always in a similar reluctant return and application of new insights to the problems of eighteenth-century Europe.

In his opinion many modern writers, because of their confining obsession with one kind of civilization, overlook the concept of change as it applies to nations, therefore neglect the principles that determine their course. In contrast, while exploring the sources and effects of national character in the origins and trans-

formations of various peoples, Rousseau is inclined to interpret history in terms of man's flight from what is rustic, simple, and orderly toward affectation, economic and technological complexity, toward violence and revolution. He finds the explanation of this movement in physical and moral causation. Material circumstance, we have seen, is a prime mover both in his theory of the origin, rise, and fall of states and in his account of the internal and external evolution of many nations of Africa, America, Asia, and Europe. The Mexican and Peruvian empires, which nature favoured with mines of gold and silver, were no match for European nations sufficient in iron. Africa, its cultures delayed by abundance and warmth, became the prey of Europe, whose temperate climate favoured the arts and sciences. Despotism has prevailed and will continue in many Asian countries because of their vast territories and widely scattered populations. Iron and wheat, the arts of metallurgy and agriculture, have been the big factors in advancing society. Europe, since it had a soil fertile in wheat and rich in ore, was civilized more continually and systematically, if not sooner, than the other continents (iii.172, *Inégalité*). In Europe, the chance arrangement of mountains, seas, and rivers determines the boundaries, therefore the number and size of nations. In a way, the 'political order' of this part of the world is the 'work of nature' (p.570, *Paix perpétuelle*). Topography, climate, and material resources predestine each of these nations to an unending rivalry. The so-called balance of power, which statesmen so shrewdly attempt to manipulate, is in fact another circumstance of nature, which goes its own way in spite of the plans of men: 'this balance subsists, it needs only itself to be preserved without anyone meddling with it; and even if it were broken for a moment on one side, it would reestablish itself soon on the other; so that if princes, whom one has accused of aspiring to universal monarchy, have really had that aspiration, they showed thereby more ambition than genius.' The fact is that no king in Europe is superior enough in strength to become master. This balance is beyond human control. It is a natural force.

It 'was never established by anyone', and 'no one has ever done anything intentionally which preserved it' (p.570).

Most historians, too, he complains, neglect the moral conditions which follow upon man's problem-solving efforts to adjust to the accidents of nature. They see a victory or defeat as causes of events, when usually the outcome of war is the effect of a chain of cause and effect leading far back into the national past. A state defeated in battle was defeated years before by innovations which fostered vice, idleness, and cowardice among its citizens, by changes in governmental machinery which led to despotism, by loss of an invigorating liberty and the patriotism which goes with it. The histories of nations in every continent, Egypt, the Incan and Aztec empires, Arabia, the Jewish nation, China, the several countries of Europe, have in this sense lessons to be discovered by the political scientist. Rome perhaps represents for Rousseau the most complete progression of moral causes contributing to decline. Because of her physical situation among threatening enemies, she passed from rustic simplicity, liberty, equality, and a defensive foreign policy, to the triumphs which brought influence from more advanced civilizations and a resulting object-orientation attended by luxury, prestige of city life at the expense of agriculture, effeminacy, loss of patriotic feeling, the use of mercenary armies, more designed to oppose citizens than win victories abroad, cowardly subservience to despots, final collapse at the hands of the barbarians. Ancient nations, Athens, Sparta, Rome, modern nations, Geneva, England, and others, must attribute the health and success of their moments of ascendency to the moral climate created by sound institutions. His hope for Corsica and Poland rested on the belief that a particular form of government, compatible with the physical features and pressures basic to each, would maintain in vigour the demonstrated moral integrity of their peoples.

Physical necessity therefore leads the way as man by reacting perfects his reasoning and by his solutions contributes to the moral advance or decline of society. Circumstances force the

community to see alternatives and make decisions, but offer no guide-posts. The processes of history lead to liberty or enslavement without preference for one or the other. In fact, by Rousseau's own account the odds favour enslavement. Yet, there is not the least doubt about the value of liberty in Rousseau's mind. Repeatedly in his evaluations, that standard is the ultimate measure. The Kafirs in their ignorance are at present incapable of it. In Poland, measures must be taken to raise the civic awareness of the peasants. The Jews possessed liberty before their dissolution as a nation. Athenian freedom, dependent in part on slavery, was gradually corrupted. The Spartans were at fault when they valued liberty less than their homeland. Rome's strength resided in her great collective will, freely expressed through her assemblies. Venice, Spain, Prussia, Russia, and France have already lost liberty. England erroneously believes she retains hers. Geneva is in danger because of encroachments on sovereignty by the council of twenty-five. Corsica and Poland are still capable of receiving new constitutions, because they have retained their liberty in spite of past catastrophes.

Liberty thus used as a standard is independent of history. Physical circumstance yields liberty only by chance. The view of history as adjustment to circumstance can offer no absolute criterion. Rousseau derives his norm, not from history, but from the state of nature, from an hypothesized original condition of man. This natural liberty, remote from reason as duty or obligation, is essentially the rule of blind appetite. Between it and Rousseau's civil liberty, defined as obedience to oneself, to the community of which each citizen forms a part, there is a clear distinction. Outside history, the freedom of the state of nature can serve as yardstick for all societies. It is an absolute, unchanging belief in human freedom or right, a claim inherent in man, a sentiment natural to him. On the other hand, the concept of civil liberty as obedience to oneself has been found gropingly as Rousseau studied the modifications given to natural liberty in hypothesized societies existing prior to history and in

very specific nations of history, Sparta, Rome, Geneva, and England.

If Rousseau is inclined to insist that natural freedom and civil freedom are equivalent in liberty, since each person seeks a convention by which each 'obeys only himself and remains as free as he was before', civil freedom is unquestionably natural freedom compromised by the demands of society (*Pléiade* iii.360, *Contrat social*). Overlooked in the past, however, there is still another compromise both to natural freedom and to civil freedom. Adjustment of liberty to the internal conditions of particular communities is not Rousseau's sole concern. The concept of civil liberty is modified further by his understanding of the external conditions under which nations survive.

The state is not for Rousseau in a sheltered position, but is constantly exposed to the influence of its neighbours, whether in the form of opinion, political pressure, or military attack. First, communication threatens the integrity of a nation's character. Egypt, Persia, Athens, and Rome were weakened by the introduction within their borders of foreign learning. European nations have all been influenced in this way. Switzerland is endangered by new ideas brought back by citizens who have worked and fought abroad. Corsica must reduce commerce, avoid a brilliant capital and large cities, move her seat of government to Corte in order as much as possible to disengage her leaders from the mainland. With the fall of Rome, the invasions of the 'barbarians' produced in Europe 'a mixture of all peoples', which destroyed the manners and customs of each of them. The crusades, commerce, navigation, long sea voyages, the discovery of the Indies, all of these events caused an exchange among the nations of their vices, not virtues, and undermined for each 'the customs which are appropriate to their climate and to the constitution of their government' (ii.964, *Narcisse*).

Second, each nation must compete relentlessly in the world arena of rivaling states. In antiquity, Egypt, Persia, Greece were in turn conqueror and conquered. Rome, surrounded by enemies,

survived by defending herself and conquering her neighbours. The nations of Europe should have more in common than nations of other parts of the world. They form 'a sort of system' and are joined by 'the same religion, the same international law, customs, letters, by commerce, and by a sort of balance of power which is the necessary effect of all that'. This European solidarity had its origin in the ties established by the Roman Empire. Similarity in civil institutions and laws gives support to these political bonds. The strongest force of all is religion. Christianity, Rousseau believes, sustained in Europe 'the kind of society which has persisted among its members' and accounts for the fact that 'Franks, Goths, Burgundians, Lombards, Avares, and a thousand others recognized finally the authority of the empire after having subjugated it and received at least in appearance with the law of the Gospel the law of the prince who had the Gospel announced to them in the first place'. But the very intimacy of these nations, so different from the situation existing in Asia and Africa, where association of states is only by name of continent, means that 'the least movement of some of them could not help but injure the others'. The *abbé* de Saint-Pierre by mistake used as precedent for his peace project the so-called grand design of Henry IV to organize Europe on a permanent basis, but this project was in fact a French scheme to gain hegemony at the expense of Austria: 'all he [Henry] needed to do to become the most powerful himself was to divide the patrimony of the only ruler more powerful than he'. While promoting his plan he made preparations to have the force to win at the proper moment by filling his treasury with money and his arsenals with artillery, arms, and munitions. Usurpation, revolt, invasion, 'mutual animosity' rather than 'fraternity', describe the relationship of the European nations: 'Let us therefore admit that the state existing among the powers of Europe is in fact a state of war, and that all the specific and limited treaties among some of these powers are more like fleeting truces than true peace' (iii.565-569, 598-599, *Paix perpétuelle*).

Conflict is an inherent part of national existence. Men make up the state. Land nourishes men. It must be sufficient therefore to provide for them: 'there should be as many inhabitants as the land can support'. Such an optimal proportion determines 'the maximum strength of a given number of people'. This ratio in turn fosters or discourages certain types of war. If a nation has too much land, the tilling of it by its people will be inadequate, and yet its yield will still be abundant. That nation to keep its excess will have to fight defensive wars. If a nation does not have enough land, it is dependent on its neighbours for what its agriculture cannot provide. The cause of offensive wars is then present. It must subjugate and thus change its position or be subjugated and become nothing (p.389, *Contrat social*). The end result is that whether they are large or small, feeble or strong, nations 'attack' one another, 'offend' one another, 'destroy' one another, and in that 'continual action and reaction' make more unfortunate people and kill more men than if 'they had all kept their first liberty' (*Lahure* ii.438, *Emile*).

Forces for stability, including the peace of Westphalia, the public law of Germany, and the defense of freedom by the princes of the Empire, are far from sufficient to assure peace. The state of war exists, not only because of the physical causes mentioned, namely, proximity of the nations of Europe and differences in their size, wealth, and force, but because of acquisitive foreign policies, the reflection of their moral condition. European nations are at one another's throats in Africa for its slaves, in America for gold and territory. Justifying their actions in the name of religion or the right of war, they have caused destruction for its own sake in Brazil, Peru and Mexico. Spain under Charles v and his immediate successors had the goal of universal monarchy. Prussia's policy of conquest is a product of the Machiavelian scheming of Frederick II. The people of Russia lack a national character. They borrowed their manners, customs, aggressive goals from other European nations. France and England because of their policies are contending in most parts of the globe.

In this environment of pressure, either from foreign ideas or invasion, the question of survival is of utmost importance. The state's means of resistance are repeatedly discussed by Rousseau. The arts and sciences, so often seen as a source of power in the eighteenth century, are for him destructive of character and incapable of building the economic health and the defenses of the nation. Weakened by them, Egypt and Persia were repeatedly conquered. China, in spite of its learned men, the wisdom of its laws, the enlightenment of its ministers, fell to the crude and ignorant Tartars, whose multitudes were a solid indication of their vigour as a people. The swarms of barbarians who inundated Europe and Asia had no arts, no sciences, but they were united in their goals, therefore dared attack and succeeded in defeating nations noted for their wealth, industry, commerce, and military discipline (*Pléiade*, iii.206-208; *Inégalité*). Conquest, however, is not a sound basis for survival either, since the victors are always corrupted by the conquered. Rather than technology or conquest, liberty is for Rousseau the most solid foundation of the nation. Defense of liberty is the driving force which in his analysis of Rome explains its successes against powerful enemies.

The term liberty has two senses in Rousseau's account of nations. When he talks of the freedom of the Spartans, of the Romans, the freedom of the Genevans, the Corsicans, the Poles, the English, liberty is: 1. the individual's association with the state either as part of the sovereign or as citizen under the sovereign; 2. the sentiment of belonging to one nation, a meaning less reasoned, more instinctive and emotional than the first. Liberty as association has many facets and relationships, including contractual formula, the sovereign, the legislator, the government. Liberty as emotional attachment relates to customs, religious beliefs and rites. It is our conviction that each of these fundamental aspects of Rousseau's doctrine bears the mark of the external pressures which have figured extensively in his references to most areas of the globe.

In Rousseau's account of the event, the formation of society by contract presupposes the state of war. Otherwise, the strongest members of the community could not be induced to invert the compact. An objection to the theory of mutual giving of themselves by all parties to the agreement is that the strongest by this procedure at first glance seems more favoured than the weak, since he has by contract converted more possessions into property. But the advantage is not real. The justification for the poor, much clearer, is to be found in the civil protection they receive. They are no longer subject to oppression by men stronger than they. From the moment the compact goes into effect they depend no longer or at least in smaller degree upon force and are sustained in their rights by laws of the community of which they are a part. The logic, however, by which the strongest can accept the contract is much more difficult, since no such advantage obtains for him. He is in effect asked to give up the 'right' of the strongest, exploiting the weak, the natural claim that goes with his power. The pact hampers his efforts to acquire new wealth. He must forego the individual sway he previously held over weaker neighbours. The argument of self-preservation which Rousseau gives to explain the willingness of each person to accept the compact, 'I suppose men to have reached that moment when the obstacles which stand in the way of their preservation in the state of nature effectively resist the resources which each individual may use to maintain himself in that state', this argument can in fact be meaningful to the strongest only if there is threat from a community already formed or about to be formed (p.360, *Contrat social*). Rousseau leaves no doubt about the situation. Anyone outside the first society would have to join it or form another to resist it: 'It is necessary to join this first society or unite to resist it. It is necessary to imitate it or be swallowed up by it' (p.603, *Etat de guerre*). Additional communities are formed in an atmosphere of threat from established communities: 'One can easily see how the formation of a single society makes the establishing of all the others indispensable, and how to resist united

forces, it was necessary for other men to unite in turn' (p.178, *Inégalité*.

Second, the contract generates power needed for survival in disputes with enemy communities. By the oath of the Corsicans, the citizens swear 'to live and die' for the homeland. Citizenship is automatically awarded those patriots who have already struggled to deliver 'their nation at the price of blood'. Their union in defense of the nation must create, Rousseau says, the public force present in Sparta, but even more characteristic of Rome. Whereas the Spartans made love of country the highest good, the Romans, more deeply moved and inspired by freedom's sentiments and processes, saw homeland, glory, and liberty joined into one concept. Liberty was for Rome the supreme value and the cause of her strength: 'Sparta did not even have over Rome the advantage inherent in small states of firmly withstanding attacks from the greatest nations, reversals in fortune, and the approach of complete ruin. For their beginnings were equally weak and if the first had to face the kings of Persia, Epaminondas and Antipater, the second had to withstand the Gauls, Pyrrhus, Hannibal. Showing an even greater constancy in resisting adversity, Rome's defeats only made her more inflexible, and that pride, which Sparta did not have to as high a degree, finally permitted Rome to win over all of her enemies. In both instances it was the same virtue guided by different maxims. Always ready to die for his country, a Spartan loved the homeland so tenderly that to save it he would have sacrificed liberty itself. But the Romans never supposed that the homeland could outlive liberty or even glory' (pp.542-543, *Parallèle entre Sparte et Rome*). If one purpose of the pact is to establish freedom and equality by removing any one individual or private group from control, the power generated by this kind of union is in the Roman context of survival an equally important consideration.

A third characteristic of the pact is the artificiality of the creature it forms. The force of the state is not absolute, but relative, an attribute which helps explain the state of war itself. The view that

the state is a product of artifice rather than of nature, thus beyond what is human in its capacities, a tradition developed also by Hobbes, is supported by evidence Rousseau draws from experience. He asks how states so solidly established can collide with one another: 'Shouldn't their own constitution maintain them in eternal peace?' His answer stresses down to earth observations about international relations. The state, faced with the necessity of constantly gauging its strength, must look to its borders for an indication of its status. The power situation abroad is the measure of each nation's domestic power: 'The state . . . being an artificial body has no fixed measure, the size which is appropriate to it is indefinite, it can always increase it, it feels weak so long as there are others stronger. Its security, its preservation require that it become more powerful than all its neighbours. . . . Thus the size of the political body being purely relative, it is forced to compare itself continually with others in order to know itself; it depends on everything which surrounds it and must be interested in everything that takes place there . . . it becomes small or great, weak or strong, accordingly as its neighbour expands or contracts, grows strong or becomes weak' (pp.604-605, *Etat de guerre*). All nations, but especially a new nation like Corsica, a nation being reformed like Poland must recognize and withstand the destructive currents of this competitive maelstrom.

The logic of the first convention, its generation of power, and its artificiality relate to the state of war. The general will formed by this association is in part defined by the same hostile atmosphere. A people is free for Rousseau to the extent that its will is the sovereign, the legislative source of the nation. Replying to the question of what national survival ultimately means in the ever-present conflict among states, Rousseau discounts the importance of the prince's rôle or of the position of any other private person or corporation. The essence of the state is the agreement which joins together 'land, money, men, all that is comprised within the confines of the state'. The enduring strength of Rome lay in its successfully resisting efforts to represent and divide this

will for union. Voices of all the classes were heard directly through the various assemblies. The warnings Rousseau issues to Geneva, Corsica, and England concern safeguards for the legislative. He advises the Poles that a hereditary crown could never be sufficiently subordinate, that the health of Poland depends on the nation's 'entering again [upon the death of the king] into all of its rights, thus recapturing a new vigour'. On the integrity of the sovereign depends the life or death of any nation, but particularly for Poland because of her beleaguered position. War is for Rousseau the extreme case which probes to the roots the validity of the nation's constitution. This is so, because the function of war is to destroy the collective will formed by compact. It is in this sense that the state may be 'killed' without a single member of the state dying (p.357, *Contrat social*; p.608, *Etat de guerre*). If adulterated by private interests, the bonds of union under the stress of actual conflict may prove insufficient and collapse. If pure in its expression of the national genius, the union will be more likely to hold.

The moral worth of the sovereign, its will to survive, is tested by the might of other nations. The limits, too, of the nation's legislative arm are set by the state of war, by the moral vacuum existing just outside each country's frontier. In international affairs, no state can see justice except from the point of view of its own interest. In matters of foreign policy, if public deliberations were to take place, the decision by a state's collective will would doubtless be in error. The will is general only for one community, valid therefore only in that framework and not in the context of other societies which have their own will. This solipsism of each nation with regard to other nations explains the short duration of treaties, the clauses of which are violated before their ink has dried. It explains the little effect produced by the rules of international law, 'chimeras even more weak than the law of nature', which 'speaks at least to the hearts of individuals, whereas the decisions of international law, having no other guarantee than the utility of the party which submits to it, are respected only so

long as self-interest confirms them' (p.610, *Etat de guerre*). Even a well-governed nation could therefore conduct an unjust war (p.246, *Economie politique*).

The concepts of compact and sovereignty have been seen to be closely related to the state's exposed condition, the first by its logic, its generation of power, its artificiality, the second by its vulnerability and its limitations. The concept of the legislator shows a similar influence. He must omit none of the aspects of the nation's situation, for each may affect its survival. If Rousseau imitates the great lawgivers of antiquity, Moses, Lycurgus, Numa, he very clearly goes beyond them in his attention to the complexity of national problems under hostile conditions. He stresses particularly the pressures on the nation a legislator must anticipate: 'the state must give itself a certain basis for solidity, in order to withstand the shocks it must certainly experience and the efforts it will be forced to make in sustaining itself: for all peoples have a sort of centrifugal force by which they act continually against one another and tend to grow at the expense of their neighbours, like the vortices of Descartes. Thus the feeble risk being swallowed up, and none can hardly preserve itself except by entering along with all the others into a sort of balance of power which makes the pressure almost equal on all sides' (p.388, *Contrat social*). Within this survival atmosphere, the legislator considers the size of the nation, its location, topography, soil, resources, its genius, and fits to them laws determining government, economy, military force, and foreign policy. If he errs, 'assumes a principle different from the one which arises from the nature of things . . . one will see the laws gradually grow weak, the constitution change, and the state will be continually agitated until it is destroyed or changed and invincible nature again reigns' (p.393). In this context the ultimate standard is survival. Liberty for most states, not all of them, is no more than the best means to that end.

The power generated by the association of free individuals is neutral, a potential for good or evil. The nation's legislative force,

if not alienated or divided, expresses the nation's good in laws recommended by the legislator. The government, as presented by Rousseau, usually appears as a corrupting force which uses the nation's power without reference to the collective will. Although he does not approve of the sovereign's interference in the executive function, the control of the early Roman people over government as well as over legislation helps explain for him that people's capacity for retaining liberty. The leaders of Venice, after usurping sovereign authority, succeeded next in reducing the participation of the aristocracy in government. In Spain, Prussia, Russia, and France, sovereignty as well as government soon passed into the hands of a few. Geneva, Corsica, and Poland must by a system of checks and balances prevent such subversion. Rather than eliminate the *liberum veto* and confederation in Poland, Rousseau seeks only to modify them. They help guard freedom from encroachments by the executive. All governments have the inclination to undermine gradually the general will, thus reduce public unity until mercenaries are needed as much to control citizens as to guard the nation's borders. In their declarations of war and peace, princes rarely have the public interest in mind. Most of them follow in international affairs short-range rather than long-range interests: 'A prince who submits his cause to the hazards of war is aware that he is running risks, but he is less impressed by them than by the advantages he hopes to gain... if he is powerful he counts on his strength, if weak, he counts on his alliances; sometimes it is useful for him to purge ill tempers within the state, to weaken unmanageable subjects . . . and the clever politician knows how to draw advantage from his own defeats. . . . The ministers need war to make themselves necessary, to give the prince troubles from which he cannot extricate himself without them, to bring about the ruin of the state if necessary rather than the loss of their position' (pp.594-595, *Jugement sur la paix perpétuelle*). The sophist of any royal court prefers 'a large territory and a few impoverished subjects' to a 'happy and flourishing people'. Under the regime proposed

in theory by Rousseau, the prince would be responsible to the people if his foreign policy, the domain of the executive since it consists of specific acts, should jeopardize individual liberty and national survival, the ultimate concerns of the general will.

If the legislator has been successful, the laws he has created tie each individual to the general will and make of union a potent force. The very perfection of his laws, however, may cause divisive rather than cohesive attitudes among the people, since respect for wisdom, an appeal to reason, gradually changes to curiosity, questioning, and doubt about the bases of law. The true legislator, therefore, uses a principle stronger than reason. He binds the emotions with national customs, public games, spectacles associated with the national past, exclusive religious rites, ceremonies, and beliefs. By such means Moses succeeded in giving to his nation a will which outlived for five thousand years the body of the nation and which still lives. His aim was to make of a wandering, servile multitude 'a free people'. The Arabs and Persians, too, owed much of their solidarity to shared religious beliefs. Liberty means for Rousseau in this context the sense of being separate, distinct, and unified as a people, the fostering of 'manners and customs incompatible with those of other nations' (p.957, *Gouvernement de Pologne*). By similar means the Corsicans and Poles must build a national character capable of surviving even the state. The Russians, since they borrowed their character ready-made from the capitals of Europe, have no liberty as authentic national entity.

The mutual surrendering of men with all of their goods and forces to the community produces spiritual and material strength for resisting or conquering an enemy. The will formed in this creative act must continue to express the national genius discovered by the legislator. If the legislative process peculiar to liberty is hindered or aborted by government, the continuing sense of collective creativity which generates survival power is lost and the prior and persisting pressure from outside brings

dissolution of the nation. Each aspect of liberty as defined by Rousseau, contract, sovereign, legislator, prince, and national tradition, reflects this state of war.

IV

When assembled, Rousseau's many, if at times unoriginal comments about various aspects of ancient and modern societies, provide nevertheless a general, often clear view of his understanding of the continents. His analyses of regions of Africa and America, their cultures, resources, or policies, show why they are exploited lands. In terms of the physical and moral evolution of their countries, the Middle East and Asia appear as either the stronghold of despots or the domain of religiously oriented peoples. He takes little interest in the potential of any of these territories except as areas of conflict for European states. Some of the nations of Europe's past, particularly Sparta and Rome, are made to stand through the brilliance of their civil liberty in sharp contrast with European societies of his time. The latter either have already totally sacrificed their freedom or are tempted like the Genevans to forsake liberty while uncritically embracing the dubious advantage of commercial and industrial prosperity. Predicting England's immediate financial ruin and loss of liberty, Rousseau seems seriously to question the continuance of the rising might which was already giving her preponderance in Europe. Similarly, because of their leaders' policies of conquest and usurpation, he is led rather inopportunely to discount the lasting importance of Prussia and Russia in the European balance of power. He somewhat more astutely evaluates the rôles of the peace of Westphalia and of the German Empire as stabilizing forces in Europe. At the same time, because of the colonial goals and the schemes for hegemony pursued by the dynasties of Spain, France, Austria, and England, he is forced by his realism to believe Europe a jungle of conflicting interests and the entire world

through seapower the theatre of war among powerful, but declining nations, spiritually decadent and moribund in their leviathan thirst for territory and power.

Given this view and his requirements for a cohesive national spirit and sound civil structure, Rousseau more out of conviction than for belittlement of nations of his day must find Corsica (later Poland) the only country in Europe still 'capable of legislation' (p.391, *Contrat social*). But his principles, if incompatible with contemporary projects for superficial reform, are not conceived and formulated in a vacuum. Although he rather traditionally has his standards originate in a hypothetical state of nature, they are later closely allied with the framework of international politics he has built from his own observations and from accounts and reports by ancient and modern writers.

Man in his most primitive condition lives in isolation. He depends on the elements and animals. He has natural liberty. Later, men assemble informally without adopting any system of authority. Through rivalry the life of each person is threatened. For preservation of themselves, they then form civil society by means of an initial agreement acceptable to all members of the community. Natural liberty is in this way altered by political instruments guaranteeing to each participant rights which are nearly uniform, therefore limited. But this modification of natural liberty is not the only one. At this stage it is not just a matter of safeguarding the individual and his rights on the domestic level. One society gives rise to many more, and the life of each nation is constantly threatened either physically or morally. Rousseau's information about the evolutions and relationships of numerous nations of history provides him with the perspectives and insights he needs to understand this predicament and to discover some of the causes for the rise and fall of nations, some of the reasons for their success in the struggle for survival.

Certain countries offer evidence of physical influence: Rome's encirclement by powerful enemies, which underlay the integrity of her collective will, her inevitable policy of conquest, the sub-

sequent decline of her free assemblies; the fall of the Mexican empire, determined in part by lack of iron and by Tlaxcalan independence; the healthy influence of the central position of the German empire on the European equilibrium; the advantageous location of Switzerland, which has slowed her loss of liberty; the hindrance of size to any projects to establish free institutions for Corsica and Poland.

Other nations indicate the moral passage from national integrity and liberty to an object-oriented, materialistic, enslaved society, especially Egypt, Persia, Athens, imperial Rome. Sparta and republican Rome, early citadels of liberty, hold lessons and warnings for its more doubtful, modern champions, Geneva and England. The cohesive force of custom, ceremony, religion are best felt in his treatment of the Hebrew nation, Persia, Sparta, Rome, Arabia, Venice. In many of the lands he discusses, liberty has been threatened from within by instruments which undermined the people's participation in the legislative power: dictatorship, originally used by Rome as an emergency measure; excessive use of the representative principle by Venice, Geneva, Poland, and England. The difficulties that free institutions encounter in competing within the hostile environment of balance of power are illustrated in his descriptions of Corsica, Poland, and England.

The basic principles of Rousseau's concept of civil liberty are defined in terms of the state of war his knowledge of history has imposed on his thinking. The liberty, power, survival nexus, characterizing beleaguered Rome, permeates the contract, its logic, which assures acceptance by the strongest, its capacity for generating power, the danger for all nations implicit in the artificial, therefore limitlessly expanding nature of each. The object of war, destruction of a state's ability to survive, helps identify the sovereign, for rather than any partial will, like that of king or representative assembly, only the people's collective will may be so totally vulnerable. The infallibility of that sovereign's justice, moreover, is terminated without equivocation by the chaos of

conflicting interests lying beyond each nation's boundary. It is also partly in the name of survival, as well as for individual and collective freedom, that government is made subordinate to the sovereign and that the wisdom of the law is buttressed by the stronger cohesive force arising from common customs and beliefs. The legislator's task is all the more complex because of the demands the state of war places on his understanding and skill. If he fails appropriately to match principle with environment, the death of the state necessarily follows. Even his choice of moment to bring the nation into being must be carefully gauged, for the country capable of free institutions must from its inception have the force to resist 'a sudden invasion', to defend itself alone against each of its neighbours, or 'to use the help of one to repulse the other' (p.390, *Contral social*).

In their works, Windenberger and Lassûdrie-Duchêne have discussed at some length the question of how the small state in federation with others may maintain itself. In contrast, we have stressed the international problems facing both large and small states: their dependence on physical environment and the earlier stages in their moral evolution; the weakness of international law, the reign of force in the affairs of states, the necessity for constantly adjusting foreign policy to the changing outside world; the vulnerable aspects of the state, whether because of the self-annihilation implicit in a policy of conquest or because of the constant physical and moral impact nations exert on one another; the need to invent methods and means of warfare natural to the country and its frontiers; the effect of warring conditions on Rousseau's very approach to civil liberty, which if fully conceived and implemented becomes the nation's best defense, superior to any advantage from money, goods, and mercenaries the arts and sciences may temporarily offer. Desiring to escape the values of the declining nations of Europe and to find modern bases for society in which homeland, freedom, and glory, as in Rome, are inseparably joined, Rousseau produces concepts of contract, sovereignty, legislator, government, and religion which

make liberty as collective will an end in itself, but which simultaneously turn this same liberty through the spiritual and physical power it engenders into an instrument of survival to defend the nation against opinion from abroad and against foreign political and military pressure.

Reconstruction and interpretation of the genesis of the Bélisaire affair, with an unpublished letter from Marmontel to Voltaire

by John Renwick

In volume 65 of *Voltaire's correspondence* (pp.81-82), there is to be found—in the absence of the original four-page autograph—a short, but nevertheless highly revealing extract, transcribed from a dealer's catalogue, of a letter written by Marmontel to Voltaire *c.*25 March 1767. This extract is in itself extremely important in terms of the very particular light that it casts on the *affaire de Bélisaire*, for it alludes most obviously (as mr Besterman has pointed out), to the *Première anecdote sur Bélisaire* which marked the first of Voltaire's many intrusions into the scope and conduct of this quarrel which, until the end of March 1767, had brought Marmontel and the Sorbonne to unequal grips upon theological points. However, before attempting to set down and then to examine the original, it is absolutely necessary to give attention to the background of the quarrel; on the one hand because it appears that the exact significance and importance of the *affaire de Bélisaire* (which has for long been a mere phrase in manuals)[1] are widely ignored; and on the other because without

[1] the main person to have given an examination of the subject was S. Lenel in his *Marmontel* (1902), pp.316-351. But at the final count only 23 pages are devoted to the affair, and the result is extremely poor. But see also L. Capéran, *Le Problème du salut des infidèles* (Paris 1912), pp.407-414.

some general discussion of the background the full significance of this particular unpublished letter would be seriously repressed.

Generally speaking, to return to the first point, it is known that *Bélisaire* was a book which aroused some dissension in 1767, and again that it involved Marmontel and then Voltaire in a running battle with the Sorbonne on the question of religion and particularly civil toleration. But knowledge of the affair and its conduct very rarely extends beyond these few vague items of information. Let it suffice to say that a thorough examination of the whole subject (which is obviously not therefore within the scope of this article) would show that the affair was certainly of extreme importance in its contemporary context. In the first place it would be seen that it was without any doubt the resounding but now unsuspected, even forgotten climax to the famous Calas and Sirven affairs. And were it for this consideration alone the matter should hold some promise of interest. But its claim to remembrance and attention does not, nevertheless, rest upon this association alone, because the affair had another side which made it momentarily far more important than its now illustrious forerunners. In few words it was also an extremely bitter quarrel which came very rapidly to be conducted, openly and in unprecedented manner, as a test of strength between reaction and enlightenment.

Let us approach the subject of the quarrel from the point of view of the person who was responsible for it. Early in the year 1767, when Jean-François Marmontel was about to give his didactic and philosophical novel *Bélisaire* its public airing, he felt that one chapter above all others was destined to arouse belated official disapproval. From personal experience—since he was a former candidate for holy orders—he strongly suspected that the tenor of his XVth chapter[2] in politico-religious terms (despite the fact that it had been passed by a competent censor), would be judged offensive in stricter circles. But, basing himself upon the experience of contemporaries who had fallen foul of orthodoxy, he

[2] *Bélisaire* (Paris 1767), pp.231-254.

feared above all that his credo would not elude for very long the vigilance of the narrow-minded Sorbonne. And as future events were to prove, his premonitions on these scores were to a certain extent well founded.

The first record of the public appearance of the book is noted on 3 February 1767, when Marmontel presented a copy of *Bélisaire* to the Académie française. And it was probably from this period onwards, as a timorous novice in putting forward unmistakeably theologico-philosophical views that he daily feared the reaction and correspondingly rapid intervention of the Sorbonne. However, if he was prey to the power of his own imagination, he must have overlooked the fact that the process was always relatively slow; and he had to endure an uneasy lull of between ten and twelve days while the book was sold, circulated and appraised. For it was not until 13 February, reporting news little anterior to this date that the well-informed and scrupulous Bachaumont noted that the expected effect had finally materialised. 'M. Marmontel a jugé à propos de faire imprimer l'ouvrage dont il lut quelque chose à l'assemblée extraordinaire de l'Académie Française, tenue l'année dernière en faveur du prince héréditaire de Brunswick. Il est intitulé Bélisaire: Quoique ce ne soit qu'une dissertation très-froide, très-longue, très-rebattue sur des objets de morale et de politique, quelques assertions hardies, lâchées dans le quinzième chapitre, ont échauffé le public.'[3]

Certainly from the viewpoint of strictly orthodox Catholics, and at a time when 'irreligion' was making frightening progress, the thesis which opened heaven to all men of virtue, whether pagan or Christian, and which again pleaded most strongly for civil toleration along with the separation of the secular and the religious in political terms could not fail to give rise to renewed apprehension. And at approximately the same date, we must presume, the Sorbonne became aware of the fact that yet another

[3] *Mémoires secrets* (Londres 1787), iii.142.

publication had benefitted from the relative liberality of the censors. To perceive a definite reflection of the abhorred philosophical and liberal spirit was always the signal for some alarm, and on about 15 February 1767 the *abbé* Ambroise Riballier, *syndic de la Sorbonne*, complained officially on the basis of an examination of the xvth chapter that *Bélisaire*, of which more than 2000 copies had already been sold, was flagrantly unworthy of its official approbation and royal privilege. The revelation for the *lieutenant de police* must have proved a little embarrassing. Had it merely been a question of a vulgar, fraudulent edition, suppression would have been a matter of course. But since Marmontel's work had passed through the hands of the censors, it had appeared quite legally.

The situation demanded tactful handling. For, in the first place, it was rare for a seemingly orthodox member of the Académie to draw attention in this manner; and secondly since the censors were minor officials the complaints, taken to their logical conclusion, as in the past with Montesquieu, Helvétius, Buffon and others, could only help further to discredit in the eyes of conformists both government and church vigilance. In such circumstances the approach had then to be wary, and as unobtrusive as possible. In the first instance it was necessary to ascertain why the censors had given their permission to publish; and while these inquiries were being put into effect, the *lieutenant de police* wrote to Marmontel asking him to contact the *abbé* Riballier, who would attempt to establish in what spirit and to what ends the thesis had been advanced[4].

The summons, even though expected, very likely did much to intimidate Marmontel. Prone, as were his contemporaries, to a loathing fear of the power that the Sorbonne wielded to the shame of enlightenment, he now had to face for the first time in his life,

[4] this letter is not known. All the subsequent events of the interviews are reconstructed from a long letter written by Marmontel to Riballier towards the end of February. See *Œuvres Complètes de Marmontel* (Paris 1819), vii.289-302; henceforth cited only by volume and page.

and on obviously formal, even perhaps hostile grounds the spokesman for that harsh and physically intolerant Catholic religion to which he had dared propose as an alternative its basic and pure antecedents in the New testament. In his probable opinion, Riballier—as the spokesman for the faculty of theology—had convened him with the express intention of thundering against his pleas for civil toleration; or even worse, to threaten him with reprisals should he refuse to submit to orthodox directives concerning the future form and content of the xvth chapter. However, contrary to any pessimistic sentiments that Marmontel certainly harboured concerning the reception that had been prepared for him, the interview was carried out in relatively cordial tones. But if the difference between expectation and reality was surprising, the grievances that Riballier aired were even more so. He stated quite bluntly that the xvth chapter of *Bélisaire* was a premeditated attack on established religion, and that Belisarius himself—the main character—was a deist! Such accusations were completely unexpected. But relieved that his major theme, that of toleration, was not seemingly in question at all, Marmontel as an *honnête homme* could but reciprocate the cordiality of the atmosphere and attempt to offer honest correctives to Riballier's uncompromising statement:

Je vous assurai que mon intention avait été de faire de Bélisaire un chrétien doux et charitable, et de l'opposer à un chrétien fanatique tel que l'était Justinien. J'ajoutai que, dans tous les livres qui attaquaient la religion j'avais remarqué qu'on lui reprochait surtout de damner les infidèles de bonne foi, et d'autoriser les persécutions: et que j'avais voulu faire voir, autant qu'il était en moi, que son véritable esprit était absolument contraire à ces deux espèces de fanatisme. Vous me dîtes que ce motif était louable, mais que j'avais été trop loin. Je répondis que s'il m'était échappé dans les détails quelque chose de répréhensible, j'étais prêt à le rectifier; que je vous soumettais mes lumières; que je ne défendais que mes intentions; et que je vous priais de me

permettre de les justifier, en vous expliquant dans quel sens j'avais dit ce que vous n'approuveriez pas. Vous prîtes la peine, monsieur, de lire avec moi le quinzième chapitre. Je ne vous répéterai point vos critiques ni mes réponses; elles sont contenues dans un mémoire que je me propose de publier. Je dirai seulement que, malgré la légèreté avec laquelle vous passiez sur mes raisons, malgré l'espèce de répugnance que vous aviez à fixer votre attention sur les endroits du livre qui déposaient en ma faveur, je me tins dans les bornes de la modestie et de la docilité qui me convenaient, et que vous en fûtes content vous-même. Vous me fîtes l'honneur de me dire que vous étiez d'autant plus disposé à me croire de bonne foi, que dans aucun de mes ouvrages il ne m'était rien échappé jusqu'ici de contraire à la religion; et vous finîtes par m'assurer que vous feriez votre possible pour accommoder les choses sans éclat. Je vous laissai dans ces dispositions[5].

Immediately after this interview, upon arriving at his lodgings in the house of mme Geoffrin, Marmontel found that his printer, Merlin, had delivered in his absence the tenth sheet of the proofs for the second edition, which embraced half the xvth chapter. Whereupon, bearing in mind the suggestions that Riballier had made during the interview, he decided, for the sake of compromise to propose that he add explanatory notes to the so-called deistic views contained in the xvth chapter (vii.291). Satisfaction would, doubtless, thereby be given to orthodox circles, for this was the action that they themselves frequently suggested in the case of books already in circulation, but subsequently found wanting in religious terms.

To follow Riballier's suggestion was not, however, to Marmontel's mind a degrading show of fraternisation; it must be

[5] vii.289-290. Despite the tone of this letter, there is still every reason to believe that the first interview was held in a relatively cordial atmosphere. In reviewing some time later the happenings and tenor of this first meeting, Marmontel was writing under an intense feeling of exasperation.

borne in mind that the consideration underlying Marmontel's stance and actions throughout the preliminary stages of the quarrel was that he was so utterly convinced of the truth and urgency of his ill-disguised pleas for immediate toleration that it was imperative for their widest possible diffusion and publicity that *Bélisaire* should continue to sell. But this could obviously be the case only if he brought the religious authorities to understand, by the good offices of Riballier, that his thesis had been advanced in good faith, that he was anxious to give further irrefutable proof of this, and that he was, therefore, beyond serious reproach[6]. In actual practice to add explanatory notes to the profession of faith as made by Belisarius would be a very small personal sacrifice considering that the main theme of the xvth chapter, which was after all not apparently in question, would thereafter be free to circulate. However, not sure that his memory was serving him correctly, Marmontel returned to see the *Syndic* in order to establish a list of those propositions which stood in need of clarification, believing in so doing that he was winning the initiative (*c.* 17-18 February 1767). For by making such a show of docility and good faith, he thought that he had found sufficient grounds for conciliation. But if Marmontel had thought to escape so easily, he had sadly underestimated the zeal and suspicion of his adversaries. On this second occasion he found Riballier more critical, more severe, and certainly more demanding: 'Je vous trouvai plus difficile, et je m'aperçus très-bien qu'on vous avait animé. Vous insistâtes sur l'imputation du déisme, et sur l'autorité que Bélisaire donnait à sa conscience, à laquelle, disiez-vous, il subordonnait la foi. Quant à la proposition que je vous fis de tout éclaircir par des notes, vous me dîtes qu'il en fallait non seulement dans cette feuille, mais dans la suivante. Il y avait à cela quelques difficultés dont je vous fis le détail; mais je ne m'y arrêtai point. Je vous suppliai de marquer

[6] nothing was more certain than that a refusal in unequivocal terms to be reasonable would have brought about the immediate suppression of the second edition and its censure.

les articles qui exigeraient ces notes correctives, et vous me promîtes d'assembler quelques docteurs des plus sages pour vous consulter avec eux' (vii.291).

The tone of the second interview was as disturbing as it was disappointing. Marmontel had planned and certainly still meant, by giving candid and sufficient explanations of his meaning, to free *Bélisaire* from orthodox objections. But no matter how aware he was that docility and moderation of attitude were necessary to this end, his self-restraint was nevertheless in danger of being subordinated to growing indignation. He did not accept the criticism of deism—a system that he had never intended to establish—for his ideas, he believed, ran parallel to orthodox but misguided, debased religion. The theology of *Bélisaire* was in his opinion the Christianity of the gospels. And were it to be reapplied in the contemporary church it would have purified religion and made disputes, along with persecution, impossible. Riballier, therefore, by his increasingly narrow outlook was not only showing himself unworthy of his vocation, but he was also becoming apparently a potential source of danger: 'Cependant votre persévérance à voir un déiste dans Bélisaire, et l'opinion où je vous avais laissé, que je donnais trop à la conscience au préjudice de la foi, me causaient de l'inquiétude. J'eus l'honneur de vous écrire le lendemain pour opposer, à vos préventions sur ces deux articles les mêmes éclaircissemens que j'ai insérés dans mon mémoire[7]; je vous suppliai de nouveau de compter sur ma docilité, et d'en répondre ainsi que de ma bonne foi, aux théologiens avec lesquels vous deviez délibérer' (vii.291).

As Riballier had decided, the theologians with whom he was to deliberate were mustered on the evening of 19 February 1767. The details of their meeting appear not to have been recorded[8],

[7] neither the letter nor the memorandum (which the archbishop of Paris was to request at his first meeting with Marmontel *c.*24/25 February) are known.

[8] the registers of the Sorbonne are to be found in the Archives nationales, series MM. But there is no account in the register of deliberations of the meeting (or for that matter of any meeting) that took place on 19 February 1767.

but the outcome of the deliberation itself between the Syndic and those he had termed the 'most learned doctors' gave rise to an extremely harsh letter written by Riballier at the close:

J'ai fait part de votre lettre, monsieur, aux personnes que j'ai consultées ce soir sur votre livre. Vos explications leur paraissent, comme à moi, tout à fait insuffisantes. Je conviens que vous parlez de révélation et de vérités mystérieuses dans le chapitre en question; mais ce ne sont que de vains noms, qui ne sont là que pour la parade, et pour jeter de la poudre aux yeux. Dans le fait vous regardez la révélation comme fort indifférente, ou au moins comme très inutile pour les mœurs. Vous le dites même expressément, page 243: 'Les vérités mystérieuses qui ont besoin d'être révélées ne tiennent point à la morale. Examinez-les bien. Dieu les a détachées de la chaîne de nos devoirs, afin que sans la révélation il y eût partout d'honnêtes gens.' A quoi donc sert ce supplément de la conscience? S'il ne nous apprend rien pour notre conduite, si nous connaissons tous nos devoirs sans avoir recours à ce moyen, vous devez convenir que rien n'est plus inutile. D'un autre côté, ces vérités mystérieuses, qui, selon vous, ne sont que des vérités de spéculation, ne sont point du tout nécessaires pour le salut, puisque l'on peut être sauvé sans les croire, et que vous mettez dans le ciel non seulement les héros païens qui ont précédé l'établissement du christianisme, mais encore ceux qui ont connu cette religion, et qui en ont persécuté les disciples. A quoi donc peuvent servir ces vérités? Je vous avoue que, s'il y a quelque chose qui me paraisse évident, c'est la conséquence que l'on tire de la lecture du chapitre xv, qu'il n'a d'autre but que d'établir le déisme, et de faire regarder le christianisme comme une religion odieuse, ou au moins fort indifférente. Je n'imagine aucune explication qui puisse empêcher cette impression. Il faut donc vous déterminer à supprimer ce chapitre, ou à le refondre de manière que l'on n'y aperçoive pas le moindre vertige du premier système. Puisque vous voulez parler de la religion, parlez-en d'une manière convenable; ou trouvez bon que ceux qui sont

chargés par état de la défendre, prennent ses intérêts: c'est que je compte faire en mon particulier, en demandant à la faculté de théologie une censure raisonnée, qui puisse servir de contre-poison aux maximes dangereuses que vous établissez dans votre livre' (vii.292-293).

The brutal tone of the letter, the complete change of attitude and the seemingly final refusal to consider any further the previously suggested explanatory notes were doubtless to Marmontel a source of mixed bemusement and anger. Initially Riballier had shown a spirit of conciliation which did not exclude a certain willingness to understand. The pose that he had come to adopt by 17 February, which was gruffer and more uncompromising was, as Marmontel himself suspected, due to the infectious zeal of other competent, orthodox theologians conversant with the issue. However, the complete transformation evident in the above letter was absolutely unexpected, and Marmontel may have sensed that Riballier had assumed a mask.

The basic Riballier (of whom a word must be said) so contemporary judgements and his own subsequent behaviour lead to believe, *was* conciliatory, and had the affair been left to his handling there is reason to think that it would have been conducted with little rigour, consequently with little public attention. The stand that he had adopted was then strange, and can only be explained, we feel, in terms of the position that he held in the Sorbonne, and of the faithful representation that he was expected to give of its views and policies. In 1766 Riballier had been made a member of the commission of bishops and magistrates, which had been created to examine the regular orders of the clergy. And in this capacity, it was said, particularly in the faculty of theology, that he had betrayed his position as *syndic* by showing too much comprehension and gentleness towards the Jansenists.

His initial treatment of Marmontel was in the same vein; but their meeting and the tenor of their first discussion most

obviously did not pass unnoticed by his colleagues. Here it was no longer a question of Jansenists, but of more serious adversaries, and here obviously was the ideal occasion for the malcontents in the Sorbonne to exert pressure on their spokesman. By threats of destitution, by intimidation or merely by forceful argument? How exactly they induced Riballier's unwilling action will probably never be known[9]. But if the real causes of the volte-face did occur to Marmontel, they did nothing to calm his indignation. It was the effect that was the important thing and previously, whenever his honesty in literary matters had been questioned, his attitude to the source of malevolent or unfounded criticism had always been of a very positive nature[10]. The affront, therefore, that he had just received did not augur well for his coming attitude. It must be said to his advantage that he was never a striking example of blind, unapproachable self-righteousness. But on the other hand it is perfectly true to say that whenever he was persuaded of the truth of what he had honestly written, he was incensed by the opposing party's refusal to treat him and his productions with corresponding honesty.

[9] Riballier was against a public censure, and it would seem that he would have far preferred to conduct the inquiry in his own unobtrusive manner. On this subject the editors of the Kehl edition of Voltaire's works said: 'Il est juste ici d'observer que Riballier, Syndic de Sorbonne, est un homme d'esprit, de mœurs douces, assez tolérant, qui céda malgré lui au délire théologique de ses confrères. Il avait à se faire pardonner sa modération à l'égard des Jansénistes et, pour l'expier, persécuta un peu les gens raisonnables'. This explanation coming from the editors of the Kehl edition, and in such terms, is a fair guarantee of truth. However, it is not the exact truth. Riballier's behaviour throughout 1767 makes it fairly clear that he was forced, against much better judgement, into adopting an uncompromising orthodox stand.

[10] his quarrels with Fréron between 1748 and 1750 can serve to illustrate this point. One of Marmontel's characteristics in literary matters was that he treated his own rôle of writer and critic with great seriousness and equal moderation; and consequently was averse to the critical approach that was founded on personal, political and philosophical dislikes. On the subject of his verbal, written and (well-nigh) physical battles with Fréron see: *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, i.30-58, 104-125, 261-267; *Nouvelles littéraires* (Raynal), i.374-375; *Journal et mémoires du marquis d'Argenson*, vi.72; *La Bigarure*, i.147-152.

He had already suspected that the rising liberal spirit of the century was being epitomised and judged in *Bélisaire*, irrespective of his wishes and with complete disregard for his intentions. This alone was legitimate cause for some initial resentment; but the volte-face evident in Riballier's letter was indicative of what he so consistently disliked most, not only in literary matters but in human relations also: blatant intolerance and hypocrisy. In his estimation, his good faith had been flouted, his attempts at self-justification ridiculed, his quotations truncated, his intention wilfully misconstrued; and this in terms of Marmontel the *honnête homme* was an unforgivable matter.

And yet, in all sincerity, he had only himself to blame. For his argument in the xvth chapter cannot withstand critical analysis, and is certainly open to adverse interpretations. This consideration however was not wholly present for Marmontel, and thus the strongly worded reply that he composed under intense ill-feeling some days later is not surprising: 'Lorsque je reçus, monsieur, votre lettre du 19 février, je demandais la paix, et je crus devoir dissimuler tout ce qu'une lettre si dure avait d'injuste et d'offensant pour moi. Mais à présent que j'ai perdu toute espérance d'éviter un éclat, vous ne trouverez pas mauvais que je revienne sur cet objet' (vii.289).

In recalling the past interviews, and in discussing their atmosphere, Marmontel approached with great resolution and in strong terms the malicious accusations that were evident in Riballier's letter: in the first place, if the explanations which had been given appeared insufficient, then it was manifestly the fault of the *syndic*. He had only to ask for extension and amplification of the points in question, and Marmontel would have given them in good faith. Yet Riballier had neglected to do so, and the dogmatic stand that he had adopted on Marmontel's incomplete self-justification was not therefore permissible. But in the second instance if this approach was far from correct, then the quotations which had been attacked had quite obviously been handled with a gross disregard for honesty, context and intention.

The genesis of the *affaire de Bélisaire* was now indisputably in this mutually hostile approach; but the obvious factor which was leading to lack of comprehension throughout was that the Sorbonne and Marmontel were arguing on different levels and to different ends. It is quite clear that Marmontel's intention and general thesis did not interest the Faculty. The true relationship, moreover, between the general argument and the quotations that they stigmatised was of no importance. Highly versed in orthodox, catholic theology and its terminology, inflexible on all else that seemed to contradict it, the learned doctors had only eyes for what they supposed to be the basic thesis. In this sense they fastened on those words and phrases which stood out, irrespective of context, and which shocked their sense of propriety.

In this way, what they had 'seen' made them advance the argument that Marmontel himself had intended to extoll and even establish deism. Consequently they led themselves to state (with a boldness that they were bitterly to regret in the coming months) that he had meant the public also to reach the same conclusion as they themselves. And their conclusion had led Riballier (or the voices that dictated his letter) to advance the harsh and erroneous findings concerning Marmontel's treatment of the revelation and the mysterious truths which was qualified as a: 'parade pour jeter de la poudre aux yeux'.

Such was, we believe, far from being Marmontel's intention. And without going into the details of the particularly platitudinous argument, the passage in which he speaks of the 'revelation' and which was singled out for attack must be taken in relation to the whole argument. In short, the argument regards those people who, either because they were born before the revelation of Christianity or because they had for political and social reasons no intimate knowledge of Christianity at all, could not have known or who were hindered from knowing of the 'mysterious truths'.

The Sorbonne, however, was transposing this particular quotation to embrace exclusively contemporary Christians, preferring

to ignore that Marmontel, in seeking salvation for all good men, was trying to find a common moral basis for the past and the present, for the initiated and the ignorant; and that he had already stated to support this hope (inadequately and in a clumsily off-hand manner it is true) that: 'la révélation n'est que le supplément de la conscience' (p.238), to which was subsequently added the contemporary rider: 'qu'on me propose des mystères inconcevables, je m'y soumets, et je plains ceux dont la raison est moins éclairée ou moins docile que la mienne' (p.240).

The Sorbonne had fastened suspicions on the assertions, *but the fault was Marmontel's*. The apparently scant respect paid to the revelation along with the mysterious truths is meant to pave the way convincingly for the final and genuine argument of the xvth chapter against civil intolerance which itself was motivated precisely by differing interpretations of these same mysterious truths. And the abrupt change from one argument to the next, from the salvation of the pagans in a sentimental tone to the plea for toleration in reasoned language (where these quotations vaguely form the opening and concluding links) is disconcerting and misleading. The quotations are on two different levels and again are too far apart to be mutually supporting, even if they are interpreted favourably.

The argument, for all its apparent simplicity, is wholly inadequate and often devoid of elementary logic. Thus it will certainly not bear the attacks of hostile critics intent on proving their own interpretation. In all impartiality, however, it must be said again that the argument of the xvth chapter was not wholly meant to be reasoned; for it is without any doubt the mere description of a state of mind and of emotive beliefs that were portrayed in a bastard style and in ways and terms that were unfortunately, in this stricter context, absolutely insufficient.

Nevertheless, a level-headed examination of the whole chapter, supplemented at the same time by reasoned justifications should have shown clearly enough that it was not Marmontel's ideas that were worthy of criticism, but the very ordering of his argument

and his choice of approach and style. It was precisely because the Sorbonne had not honestly tried to follow the argument at this point in the chapter with consideration for its tone that Marmontel took exception to their inflexible qualification of one isolated quotation as extolling and leading to the establishment of deism. Surely no deist (as he said) would have subscribed to his assertion on page 240 in *Bélisaire* concerning the mysterious truths[11]? This was perhaps a valid counter-objection; and as there is no concrete reason to doubt his good intentions, the accusations that he had intended to brand Christianity (as he understood it) as: 'une religion odieuse, ou du moins très indifférente', was certainly insufferable.

In Marmontel's opinion, he had made himself the spokesman precisely for Christianity. Not (as is evident) for what it had become in a political sense, but for what it had been in the beginning and for what it still was in a moral sense. He had indeed imputed that the Catholic branch was at present intolerant, but he had strongly rejected intolerance as unworthy of true religion and as a definite blemish on the purity of primitive Christianity.

The two parties were then again arguing at cross purposes, both in respect of terminology and theme. In fact, Marmontel's theme was a plea, probably *not* for conscious deism, but for a

[11] it is decidedly delicate with Marmontel to estimate the exact proportion and extent of his sincerity with regard to the mysterious truths. For the lone and completely insufficient pronouncement to be found in *Bélisaire*, gives no foundation whatsoever for any appreciation of his beliefs and his willingness to accept the mysterious truths. Emotionally, we think that perhaps he could. However, since he favoured toleration and condemned theological disputes, it is possible to infer that, with a social conscience, he considered them, quite *practically* speaking, more of a hindrance to peace and understanding than anything else. And as he wished for widespread peace, it is highly probable that he indeed favoured—as a solid basis to this end—a dedogmatized Christian religion, or a 'primitive' faith (with no theological pedantry) which stressed above all high morality, practical charity *(bienfaisance)* and the need to love and respect god. We tend to believe that Marmontel, speaking on revelation was like Collins on the same subject, who said: 'I doubt as a philosopher, and I believe as a Christian'.

return to early Christianity as recounted in the gospels. The Sorbonne, nevertheless, had wilfully disregarded the explanations that had been given to understand the clumsy remarks concerning the revelation and the mysterious truths as the real equivalent of a rejection. The remarks were thereby all the more dangerous, and all the more indicative of Marmontel's true beliefs.

When, however, we consider that in the xvth chapter there are countless echoes of former and current liberal views, that the theologians knew that Marmontel was an accepted (if hitherto only nominal) *philosophe* and that they strongly suspected him therefore not only of deism, but also of literary hypocrisy, their conclusion is understandable. Moreover, highly conversant with philosophical propaganda and its camouflaged arguments, they were tending more and more to ignore the superficial data to probe for isolated pronouncements and subordinate themes. Their great mistake, which compromised their authority and invited their ultimate ridicule, was to apply more or less the same process to the theologically harmless *Bélisaire*.

Henceforth both parties were in an impasse. Marmontel, theologically and morally speaking, was in excellent faith; but conversely the Sorbonne, having applied their knowledge of the techniques commonly peculiar to philosophical writings, saw a reprehensible theme, and refused to credit his sincerity. Had the Faculty been less suspicious, and more approachable, it is possible that a compromise could have been reached at an early stage. But Marmontel was to ensure the impossibility of this course by replying to their accusations in harsher terms:

Si quelque chose vous paraît évident, c'est que j'ai voulu faire regarder le christianisme comme une religion odieuse. Cette évidence est donc pour vous seul? Comment ce qui est évident pour vous, n'a-t-il pas même été soupçonné par mes censeurs, par le public? Comment mon livre n'a-t-il pas excité un cri de révolte universel? Comment l'auteur n'est-il pas regardé comme un homme abominable? Oui, monsieur, abominable; vous me

supposez tel, lorsque vous m'accusez d'être fourbe et hypocrite, au point d'avoir eu dans l'âme le projet de rendre odieuse une religion dont je parle, dont je fais parler mon héros avec un respect si tendre. Ce que j'ai voulu rendre odieux, c'est l'atrocité de l'erreur qui damne les infidèles de bonne foi qui ont suivi la loi naturelle; ce que j'ai voulu rendre odieux, c'est l'atrocité des persécutions; les poignards aiguisés par le fanatisme, les bûchers allumés au nom d'un Dieu de paix. Si c'est là votre christianisme, ce n'est point celui de l'Evangile, et je déclare que ce n'est pas le mien . . . je prêche l'indulgence aux princes pour les erreurs des hommes; j'établis que la religion ne doit pas être soutenue par le fer et le feu, que 'le plus infaillible moyen pour un prince de la rendre chère à ses peuples, c'est de faire juger la sainteté de sa croyance par la sainteté de ses mœurs, et de donner son règne pour exemple et pour gage de la vérité qui l'éclaire et qui le conduit (vii.298-299).

Once again Marmontel's objections were valid and perfectly truthful. Unfortunately the Sorbonne were of the opinion that they were further evidence of a hypocritical approach to disarm their suspicions. And once again, they were already far too convinced of the validity of their own interpretation to believe the true evidence. But beyond giving repeated cause for suspicion in terms of religion, Marmontel had made an open assertion that could only invite trouble when he declared that religion could not, or should not expect secular aid for the defence of the faith. The allusion (which made no pretence to disguise) was aimed at the two powers in France: the monarchy and the church, which were always theoretically (and often in practice of policy) interdependent.

Now, Riballier in his letter of 19 February had not taken up this point at all. It had perhaps occurred to the theologians in the very fulness of implication; but since the subject was invariably so dear to the church, their silence on this point is perhaps indicative of the fact that they had not examined the whole of the

xvth chapter in detail, even less taken into consideration the true purpose of the introductory argument. Doubtless in terms of preparing an amplified criticism they would have been forced to recognise this point. Marmontel, however, had only drawn unprompted attention to it and betrayed what was the vital element in his thesis.

From this moment of revelation, the affair was destined to take on a different and more positive slant. Not only had Marmontel shown hypocrisy and strongly deistic tendencies, but he had also aggravated injury by daring to question—even negate—the interdependence of the throne and its elder daughter. If these considerations were, however, not sufficient and justifiable cause for righteous indignation, the tone of Marmontel's letter of justification from beginning to end must have appeared unwarranted. But Riballier and his fellow theologians must have been shocked to the highest degree by the disrespectful tone of the final paragraph:

Vous finissez votre lettre par me déclarer qu'il n'y a aucune explication qui soit capable d'effacer cette idée; qu'il n'y a ni addition ni explication qui puisse empêcher l'impression que fait ce quinzième chapitre. Cela peut être à votre égard: et la raison n'efface pas un préjugé pris sans raison. Mais j'espère trouver des esprits moins prévenus et plus tranquilles. Si une pareille décision était celle de la faculté entière, je la respecterais: mais votre opinion seule ne me fera pas renoncer au droit naturel de me défendre et de me justifier. Oui, monsieur, je me justifierai, et d'une manière satisfaisante pour les hommes équitables. Vous dites que vous demanderez à la faculté une censure raisonnée, qui puisse servir de contre-poison aux maximes dangereuses que j'établis dans mon livre. Il fallait dire, je crois, que vous demanderez un examen de mon livre, et une censure, s'il y a lieu (vii.301-302).

The exchanges (where Marmontel, in his letter, never ceased to become increasingly bitter, and where he had been putting words of a slanderous nature into the Faculty's mouth) were now

obviously assuming proportions of some consequence. And the opposing parties must definitely not have been content to confide their feelings to paper alone. For the dispute had now overstepped fairly restricted bounds and had reached wider public notice, for which Marmontel must have been partially responsible. There is practically no doubt of this, for the *abbé* Morellet (well-equipped and well-placed to judge) says in his memoirs that the latter was of a highly irritable nature[12]. It is then certain that he was giving full vent to his scorn and bitterness in the salons and at the Académie for the benefit of the brethren. Conversely there are very clear indications that the Faculty members for their part must also have been extremely ill-tempered and active, for Bachaumont had noted even as early as 21 February 1767 that: 'Le roman moral et politique de M. Marmontel, intitulé Bélisaire, a excité du tumulte. La Sorbonne a cru devoir s'élever contre le chapitre xv, qui parle de la tolérance. Sur ses vives représentations, le livre vient d'être arrêté. Le privilège dont il était revêtu doit être cassé. L'archevêque de Paris se dispose à tonner contre les maximes de l'auteur par un mandement, et la Faculté de Théologie va les proscrire par une censure publique.'[13]

Meanwhile, however, as the opposing attitudes were becoming embittered day by day, the inquiries pursued by the *lieutenant de police* had reached Bret, Marmontel's literary censor. And since a theological censure appeared inevitable or since pressure was

[12] *Mémoires* (Paris 1821), pp.238-241, and particularly: 'Jamais il n'y eut de femme plus heureuse, plus constamment heureuse que la sienne; en quoi je ne dois pas dissimuler que le caractère et l'esprit de ma nièce sont entrés pour beaucoup: car il n'était pas impossible qu'une femme de M. Marmontel fût malheureuse par quelques légers défauts du caractère de son mari, et surtout par sa très grande irritabilité'.

[13] iii.144. Bachaumont's pronouncement, though doubtless a strict reflection of the immediate truth and intention, was in a sense a little premature. The Sorbonne did indeed intend to censure the work. However (as shall be seen) the immediate backing of the archbishop was *not* a foregone conclusion.

exerted, Bret (despite the fact that it was not he who had examined the xvth chapter) was dismissed[14]. But his attitude to the summary discharge from his functions, and that of the official who informed him of it, were (we like to believe) suggestive of the general public attitude: 'Ce magistrat lui donnait cette nouvelle avec toute la mansuétude dont il est capable, les larmes aux yeux: il paraissait la lui apprendre à regret. "Eh bien! Monsieur, lui dit Bret, ne me plaignez pas tant; c'est un malheur, mais ce n'est pas un déshonneur" et Bret s'en alla, faisant une pirouette'[15].

The general public attitude towards *Bélisaire* was almost certainly indulgent, favourable and increasingly so as its thesis became more widely known. And it is not improbable that the public attitude was a strong contributory factor to the Sorbonne's worsening frame of mind (the complete brunt of which Marmontel was to bear). We may imagine—in default of concrete proof—that the very dissemination of Marmontel's reprehensible views which the profane would condone readily at any time, coupled with his blatant stance which was aggravated by his hypocrisy and insolence, were understood—in orthodox circles—as an affront and a complete negation of the respect that was due both to the Roman Catholic religion and its appointed defenders.

On the other hand, there is no reason at all to doubt that Marmontel was incensed by the Sorbonne's indefensible dismissal of his good faith—a negation on their part which was open to widespread construction as nothing less than an attack on his integrity. But to add to insult at the same time, the theologians had rejected his thesis at the service of a global and repurified Christianity

[14] the course of action adopted towards the theological censor, the *abbé* Genest, is not known. But according to Grimm nothing could be done because he had not submitted a written report on *Bélisaire*, whereas Bret had; cf. *Correspondance littéraire*, vii.290.

[15] Bachaumont, iii.170-171. The final official reaction coincides with the worsening attitude in the Sorbonne, for this dismissal is reported under the date of 26 February 1767.

which was intended to reconcile all men. This double proof of blindness and narrow-mindedness was certainly further cause for his voluble scorn.

With tempers aroused in both parties, the dispute encompassed all the possibilities of a resounding scandal. Neither side was now disposed to treat with the other, or to harbour charitable projects of conciliation. But the forces were so evidently unequal that to circumspect observers it seemed quite inevitable that, in pitched battle, Marmontel would be badly mauled. The memories of Rousseau's resistance to the Sorbonne, to Christophe de Beaumont and to the combined forces of authority were eloquent pleas in favour of docility and silence, no matter the amount of provocation. The parallel was not lost on certain friends of Marmontel, for he tells us in his memoirs that some begged him to appease the Sorbonne, while others, jealous of his honour, exhorted him to stand firm[16]. But if Marmontel had been weighing up the conflicting advice in preparation for the next phase, choice was suddenly taken from his hands. For upon the scene appeared the archbishop who, meanwhile having had second thoughts about the stand to adopt on the subject of *Bélisaire*, extended to Marmontel a proposal that he, Christophe de Beaumont, should mediate between the former and the Sorbonne.

Having been brought by the Sorbonne into a position which had extremely restricted possibilities, Marmontel must have been aware that a continuing stand in self-righteous isolation was not in his best interests. The offer, brought then by a certain *abbé* Georgel, was an excellent opportunity to re-open discussions with a moderate arbiter, and to justify with more hope of success the scope and true meaning of what he had written. And again a compromise would have meant the relatively sure re-appearance of *Bélisaire*.

[16] ii.22. The same happened, of course, in the case of Helvétius in 1758, when his friends (faced with his first two retractions concerning *De l'esprit*) would have wished for more firmness and heroism. Cf. A. Keim, *Helvétius* (Paris 1907), pp.345-346.

The offer was on the one hand an excellent solution to this latter end, and afforded Marmontel a re-opened front. But beyond the attraction of being listened to with patience, he perceived, on the other hand, possibilities of duly mortifying the Sorbonne, because Beaumont, who seemed to hold promise as an understanding arbiter, was powerful enough, if subsequently satisfied with the explanations that Marmontel was to give, to impose his favourable findings on those who had previously refused to listen. The possibility, therefore, of justifying himself in such manner (and we feel that the possibility was recognised) must have afforded much anticipated pleasure. For if the archbishop accepted the good faith of his intentions in the xvth chapter (and at the beginning there was theoretically no reason why he should not), he would be forced to imply at the same time that the Sorbonne had acted unreasonably from the very start. To ensure, however, that the Sorbonne would be forced to recant, Marmontel had to make an extremely favourable and conclusive impression on the archbishop, who after all was in theory a potential enemy also. It was for this reason that Marmontel adopted, in his preliminary meetings, an extremely humble and conciliatory stance. And Bachaumont (iii.145) himself summed up this stance on 26 February 1767, in the following terms: 'La tempête contre M. Marmontel commence à se calmer de la part de M. l'archevêque, auquel ce disciple très docile a promis telle rétraction qu'il voudrait, de faire la profession de foi la plus caractérisée, de signer la Constitution, le formulaire, etc.'

This attitude which was definitely somewhat in advance of his genuine convictions and which is, we suspect, interpreted ironically by Bachaumont also, was in practice the only method available to Marmontel. Highly conscious of his own interests and ends, he was forcing himself into a more docile posture than he normally would have wished, merely to accentuate his good faith and to prove the purity of his attitude towards religion beyond all possible doubt. Nevertheless, although his contemporaries were disconcerted or startled by the signal honour that he was doing

the enemy, they seemed to overlook that, at this stage, Marmontel was standing entirely alone, relying upon his own interpretation of how to turn the situation to advantage.

Grimm (vii.292), in particular, was consistently disdainful of Marmontel's dealings:

et a mieu aimé se jeter aux pieds du révérendissime père en Dieu, l'archevêque de Paris, duc de Saint-Cloud, pour lui confesser dans la sincérité de son cœur que, depuis l'âge de raison, il s'est toujours senti un penchant invincible pour la religion catholique, apostolique et romaine, et d'être le croyant le plus intrépide des diocèses de Paris et de Limoges. Laquelle confession ayant touché le cœur du prélat, Sa Grandeur a exigé dudit pénitent Marmontel de la consigner par écrit, ensemble les raisons sur lesquelles son vieux radoteur de Bélisaire prétend appuyer les propositions qui ont fait monter le fumet d'hérésie au nez du docteur Riballier et de ses confrères, pour le tout être remis à la Sorbonne en toute soumission par ledit pénitent, sous les auspices dudit prélat, en sa qualité de proviseur de la maison dite Sorbonne et composée de tous les aigles du monde chrétien.

Disapproval, however, was not openly voiced, for since it was a question of choosing between Marmontel and those whom Voltaire referred to as the *chats fourrés*, there were certain conclusions which were inevitable; thus some encouragement, if not approval, became evident. Towards the end of February, for example, an anonymous epigram (subsequently attributed to Dorat), ironically epitomised the differences for the observers (Bachaumont, iii.153):

Bélisaire proscrit, aveugle, infortuné,
Ferme dans le malheur, simple, sublime, sage,
Instruisant l'empereur qui l'avoit condamné,
De la terre attendrie eût mérité l'hommage....
Oui sans doute, chez les païens....
Mais parmi nous, ... chez les chrétiens,
Peindre Dieu bienfaisant, exalter sa clémence!

Inspirer aux humains l'amour et l'indulgence!
Chercher à les unir par les plus doux liens!
Jusqu'où peut nous conduire une telle morale?
Que ce blasphémateur soit puni par le feu.
N'a-t-il pas dû savoir qu'il causoit du scandale
Quand, malgré la Sorbonne, il faisoit aimer Dieu?

Such a flippant, but pointed judgement for the benefit of the public must inevitably have been comforting for Marmontel also, because apart from one letter from Voltaire, we do not know how much moral support his friends afforded him. On 28 February, having been earlier informed that the Sorbonne had fastened on the xvth chapter, Voltaire had written: 'Chancelier de Bélisaire, on me dit que la Sorbonne demande des cartons. Ce n'est pas Belisaire qui est aveugle, c'est la Sorbonne. Voici les propres mots d'une lettre de l'impératrice de Russie en m'envoyant son édit sur la tolérance: "L'apothéose n'est pas si fort à désirer que l'on pense, on la partage avec des veaux, des chats, des oignons.... Malheur aux persécuteurs, ils méritent d'être rangés avec ces divinités là." Elle ambitionnera votre suffrage, mon cher confrère, dès qu'elle aura lu votre Bélisaire, et n'y fera pas assurément de carton' (Best.13100).

But meanwhile neither the promises that Beaumont had extracted from Marmontel, nor the moderation that he himself wished to exercise seemed to have taken complete effect over the pugnacious elements in the Sorbonne. For the members of the Faculty, in open disagreement with what seemed to be an inappropriate (even dangerously pacific solution) were, theologically speaking, as uncompromising as ever. Naturally the sole effect that their hostile attitude had on Marmontel was to ensure that his resentment should become even more acute. It is no surprise, therefore, to find him writing on 8 March 1767 to Voltaire, bemoaning the wilful incomprehension to which he was victim:

Il n'y a pas moyen mon illustre Maitre, d'écrire ni de penser dans ce païs cy. Vous avez vu avec quelle modération j'ai combatu

l'opinion révoltante qui damne éternellement les Titus et les Antonins; Les fanatiques m'en ont fait un crime; et j'ai éprouvé avec une douleur profonde que Les fanatiques sont en grand nombre. J'ai eu beau leur faire voir que les pères de l'église ont eu horreur de ce dogme abominable, qu'ils ont fait des efforts d'esprit surprenans pour concilier avec la nécessité de croire en j.c.; l'espérance du salut des infidèles de bonne foi; s[t] Paul, s[t] Augustin, s[t] Thomas n'ont pas été plus écoutés que moi; et par ce que j'ai dit que La raison et la foi, la révélation et le sentiment devoient être d'accord ensemble, que les mystères de la trinité et de la procession du st esprit n'étoient point liés avec la morale, et qu'ils ne tenoient point aux devoirs d'un père, d'un époux, d'un citoyen &a, on a crié que j'étois déiste et que j'avois voulu rendre le christianisme odieux.

M[r] L'archevêque de Paris a été plus juste et plus sage. Il m'a entendu, il a désavoué ce déchainement furieux; et tandis qu'il est occupé à concilier Les esprits, Les jansénistes, qui ne demandent qu'à damner tous les gens de bien qui ne font pas miracles dans des galetas, insultent à la modération de ce prélat vertueux; ils disent qu'il protège les déistes et ne persécute que les croyans. Je vous avoue mon illustre maître que ces gens, qui prouvent la vérité à coups de bûche, m'ont fait trembler. Ce sont les plus âpres des intolérans, et si on ne les accable point sous un tas de ridicule et d'oprobre, ils vont devenir les persécuteurs de la Raison et de la philosophie. Je ne sais à quoi se terminera le soulèvement que m[r] L'archevêque tâche d'appaiser. En atendant, la seconde édition de Bélisaire est suspendue, et l'enchanteur Merlin est en purgatoire, parce que j'ai voulu tirer les Antonins et les Titus de l'enfer.

Sur ces entrefaites nos évêques meurent banqueroutiers, violent des femmes, et se font donner des coups d'épée. Dieu soit loué; mais il est surprenant qu'on ne s'occupe à corriger que Bélisaire (Best.13127).

In this particularly revealing letter, where Marmontel gives vent to his disgust at the persecution to which his liberal ideas were

being subjected in the Sorbonne, there is nevertheless a certain curious reticence concerning his own activities. And this almost complete omission to mention in unequivocal terms the fact that he had entered upon negotiations with the seemingly benign and moderate archbishop, and that he had made promises to him, can only point to apprehension lest Voltaire see to what lengths he had seemingly gone towards a compromise. This is not to infer by any means that Marmontel judged his own behaviour indefensible; but knowing his former protector's views on how to deal with reactionary elements, he certainly did not wish to divulge his movements, even less his posturing and scraping in the presence of Beaumont, for fear he attracted reproach. For one did not have to be Lefranc de Pompignan to merit a severe reprimand, for as Diderot said: 'Il est bon que ceux d'entre nous qui sont tentés de faire des sottises, sachent qu'il y a sur les bords du lac de Genève un homme armé d'un grand fouet dont la pointe peut les atteindre jusqu'ici.'[17]

Judging, however, from all extant letters to date, Voltaire was not really aware of what Marmontel was doing and promising; and again taken up at this time with the Sirven affair, he does not as yet appear to have been perturbed by the official attention that *Bélisaire* was attracting. Indeed, in an earlier letter of 4 March to Damilaville, Voltaire had qualified the difference of opinion as being a plain farce (Best.13120).

The situation, however, in Paris in the last week of February must have appeared decidedly unfarcical to committed onlookers. Most certainly, when one attempts to make some hypothetical appraisal of their reactions, it would not seem in the least improbable that, of the two conflicting approaches to the problem of the xvth chapter, the one chosen by the Archbishop appeared—quite practically speaking—by far the more dangerous for Marmontel himself (and for philosophy at large).

[17] *Correspondance*, éd. Georges Roth, vii.276.

In very basic terms, because Beaumont (with his diametrically opposed, conciliatory attitude) appeared to have gone a long way towards gaining the confidence of Marmontel, it may well have seemed that Marmontel himself—who was becoming increasingly short-tempered with the Sorbonne—might possibly bolt headlong into the archbishop's camp in this last week of February to suggest that he gave the highest and most rapid satisfaction by making a full retraction merely because it was basically the opposite of what the Sorbonne really desired and considered appropriate.

In the probable estimation of his contemporaries he might well—in his state of aversion for the Sorbonne—do precisely that, thinking thereby to mortify the Faculty and to make the public censure that they so avidly wished to prepare quite unlikely[18]. And thus it possibly seemed that, though he would obviously make mental reservations about what he was doing, he would do penance and adopt this course of action in order to have the ultimate pleasure of seeing *Bélisaire* re-appear, possibly on the formerly suggested terms of appended explanations. But such an interpretation could have been no more than short-lived. For after Bachaumont noted (on 3 March) the proceedings of the *prima mensis* in the Sorbonne the interpretation put upon the situation was fated to change. The public could not fail to be informed by devious paths that Marmontel had promised not in fact a document of his own fabrication, but his signature to *any* retraction that was presented to him.

The subsequent estimation of the events on this basis could only be infinitely pessimistic. It could now possibly appear that Marmontel (who had promised in reality far more than he had meant to give) would not easily avoid complying with the archbishop's wishes, for the very simple reason that, if he came under

[18] this was a possibility, since the archbishop of Paris directed whether or not there was to be a censure. As *proviseur de la maison de la Sorbonne* he had, in such matters, the final word. Since history assures us that he was reasonably moderate, it was theoretically feasible in Marmontel's case that—given such satisfaction—he would call a halt to the proceedings.

the influence of the Sorbonne, he might not be as unboundedly moderate as Marmontel believed. In the event, therefore, of a future pressing demand for his acceptance of a prepared retraction (which Marmontel as a *philosophe* was quite capable of refusing to sign), a refusal to keep his written promises could well be used by the religious authorities to discredit him completely. But on the other hand, to those who knew Marmontel and the price that he attached to personal credit and a good name, it may have appeared remotely possible that if a choice had to be made, he might well sacrifice moral to personal considerations.

Whatever the estimation of Marmontel's position was, it may be inferred (with some hope of approximation) that it seemed agonisingly clear to the philosophically committed that whether he signed the prepared statement or not, the outcome would be the same.

On the one hand, a retraction of his specifically written promises would probably lead to a campaign by orthodox elements to stigmatize not only *his* odious bad faith and moral turpitude, but also to stigmatise (by certain extension) the liberal ideas to which he had given expression, and along with them the *philosophes* themselves. Conversely, there is no doubt—at this precise period when orthodox religion in France stood badly in need of a completely satisfying victory over the *philosophes*—that a signed retraction (plus an appended profession of faith) would have been used for the highly propagandistic purpose of proving that moderate elements in the church were capable of 're-converting' an avowed liberal[19]. And when that liberal was as well-known as Marmontel, and as well-respected, one could fear that some damage might be done—with skilful use of his 'rejection of

[19] Marmontel was, in fact, to reject the prepared retraction. The Sorbonne and the archbishop then reverted to Marmontel's initial promise to make a retraction on his own. But the use to which it would have been put by the Sorbonne (had it ever been presented) is quite clearly brought out in the preamble of the *Censure* (which appeared in December 1767), pp.xxiii-xxiv, '*elle proposera sa soumission pour modèle à ceux qui auraient eu le malheur de s'écarter, comme lui, du sentier de la vérité*'.

liberal, deistic religion' and his 'whole-hearted submission' to the unique nature of the Catholic church—not only to the evolution of the wavering or the uncommitted, but also in some measure presumably to the progress that enlightenment had made in this field.

And what, to complete pessimistic thoughts, of the result that a self-imposed capitulation and recantation would have within the philosophical party itself, where unity of purpose and action was essential; and yet where the very probable formation of pro- and anti-Marmontel divisions could only breed discord (to the immense satisfaction of the common enemy)?

But to revert to Voltaire, who appears to have been deluded by lack of information, and to leave behind at this point the evolving interpretations of the situation as it possibly appeared to those in Paris during the last week of February and the first week of March, it was not until some days after 11 March (date at which Alembert wrote to him) that he himself had a slightly clearer idea of the situation. He was forced to realise that it was far more dangerous than he had evidently thought, and far more complicated and unsavoury than Marmontel, in his letter of 8 March, had cared to admit. Alembert informed him very succinctly that: 'L'affaire de Marmontel avec la canaille sorbonique est toujours pendante; l'archevêque, le croiriez vous! est celui qui se montre le plus modéré, et je ne sais s'il aura assés de crédit pour empêcher la Censure que la faculté veut faire. Au fond je trouve que Marmontel a fait trop d'honneur à cette canaille d'entrer en négociation avec elle, mais il est trop engagé pour reculer, et peut être pour ne pas souscrire à ce qu'on exigera de lui.'[20]

Upon receiving Alembert's letter, which contained the presumably first piece of information about the serious aspect of the

[20] Best.13134. It is not evident whether Alembert had yet heard of Marmontel's written promise to sign *any* prepared retraction. His letter is, in fact, open to interpretation. But if he did have precise knowledge of the immediate situation, it is significant that he did not mention the real facts to Voltaire.

situation (which Marmontel had taken good care not to mention, and of which apparently Voltaire had hitherto been almost completely ignorant) Voltaire also must have perceived danger. And here, once again, it is a question of attempting to say what *his* reaction was; for with the initial arousing of his interest and his temper the so-far insignificant affair was fated, slowly but surely, to become a raging, tearing campaign which was to bear—in the over-all estimation—little or no relation to the Sorbonne's initial attack, but which was cleverly made to become of great relevance to the foremost contemporary problem of toleration.

In the first place, we believe that his reaction was governed precisely by his own preoccupation at that very time with the Sirven affair and by his intimate knowledge of Marmontel's purpose in *Bélisaire*. For he knew full well (and openly acknowledged the fact) that the main theme of the xvth chapter, which all the others had consciously prepared, was a plea for civil toleration[21].

He could immediately suspect therefore (despite the tendentious information in Marmontel's letter of 8 March, which dealt exclusively with the Sorbonne's critical attitude to the salvation of pagans) that one of the main articles to be attacked would certainly be his disciple's negation of the physically imposed primacy of the Catholic religion and the interdependence of throne and church for the conservation and propagation of the faith.

But even if he knew nothing of the concocted retraction that Marmontel had somewhat stupidly promised to accept and sign, Alembert's letter of 11 March with its nebulous warning note that Marmontel had perhaps advanced too far to be able to refuse any orthodox demands could, in the second place, make Voltaire himself infer that a retraction would be expected. Knowing, however, orthodox tactics—knowing that the Faculty in similar past circumstances had always demanded submission in writing—he

[21] Best.13069: 'Bélisaire arrive; nous nous jetons dessus, maman et moi, comme des gourmands. Nous tombons sur le chapitre 15[e], c'est le chapitre de la tolérance, le catéchisme des rois; c'est la liberté de penser soutenue avec autant de courage que d'adresse'.

could further infer that a similar retraction coming from Marmontel would be equivalent (if he were not expressly directed to include the point, which was theoretically highly likely) to agreeing that the church had not only the right but also the duty to impose its beliefs upon heretics. Obviously the logical assumption of this doctrine, to which Marmontel's submission would be broadcast, was the continuing and seemingly 'condoned' implementation of what at times degenerated into ruthless intolerance by force and legalised murder.

Voltaire could almost certainly discern these possibilities and understand that orthodoxy would make public use of any submission extracted from his former protégé on this and other points. And that use, in terms of public opinion, could only render some annoying disservice to the general liberal campaign, and in particular to the fight for the implementation of civil toleration. But beyond this—in highly contemporary terms—it can possibly be taken for granted that to Voltaire's mind such a submission might well hinder in some undefined way the proceedings in favour of Sirven that were, at this very moment, in rather shaky progress.

It was not only inevitable but also only natural under the particular circumstances that Voltaire should view the situation (even on probably incomplete information) in this or some similar manner with disquiet. He decided to act immediately. Common sense must have indicated to him that to wait for further developments, to evaluate the true extent of the quarrel and the success that Marmontel's judges were possibly achieving was useless procrastination which could only invite a minor (major?) philosophical disaster. He therefore reviewed the information that was at his disposal in recent correspondence to achieve the greatest semblance of relevance to the present situation and proceeded to compose a pamphlet which was to be known as the first *Anecdote sur Bélisaire*[22].

[22] *Par l'abbé Mauduit qui prie qu'on le nomme pas; Pièces relatives à Bélisaire* (Amsterdam 1767), pp.1-8 (first pagination).

The anecdote (of which a little must be said) is among the least known of Voltaire's *facéties*. But it is, nevertheless, to be counted in many senses an achievement of no mean proportion; and it surely deserves to stand not merely as an amusing example of the way in which Voltaire could compose with wit and incision, but above all, in this particular case, with remarkable rapidity and apparent ease[23]. (In fact, at the most expansive estimation, the anecdote was composed and ready in less than six days.)

Based, it would seem, entirely upon the information that Marmontel had given in his letter of 8 March, the *Anecdote* rests upon an argumentative theme where stupidity and narrow-mindedness, in the form of the toping frère Triboulet, are opposed to equanimity and good sense in the person of two morally and physically sober *philosophes*, one of whom is obviously Marmontel. Needless to say, as Voltaire so obviously set out to achieve, Triboulet as the insolent, orthodox Catholic spokesman, who puts forward reprehensible views, who negates the wisdom of saints Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and Paul, and whose behaviour is a living insult to moderation, decency and proportion, is baffled, outargued and finally reduced to skulking shame by the two *philosophes* whose diametrically opposed attitude throughout is one of exemplary correctness.

The anecdote with its blatant bias was meant to be damaging, as indeed it was. For the orthodox dogma concerning the inexorable damnation of specific virtuous pagans, humanitarian philosophers and goodly protestant kings is ridiculed and seemingly demolished with the usual Voltairean effects. And the Sorbonne, epitomised in the base and vulgar Triboulet, is made obnoxious

[23] it is not clear whether Voltaire composed the anecdote in reply to Marmontel's letter of 8 March or to Alembert's of 11 March. But it is probable that, if he had not already started writing down his own views on the subject shortly after receipt of the former's letter, the latter's made him realise the necessity for intervention. No matter which is the correct interpretation, he had almost certainly completed the anecdote by 18 March. For he speaks of it in a letter to Damilaville on that date: 'On me parle d'une lettre de l'abbé Mauduit; je ne sçais ce que c'est . . .' (Best.13159).

for its condemnation of Marmontel's religion which was all-embracing, charitable and animated by a spirit of goodness and virtue. In reacting to the situation, Voltaire was certainly wagering—on the basis of proven experience—that much moral strength, even support, can be lost by the party that is effectively disparaged and ridiculed in full view of the public; and his intention, in showing to what inextricable depths of stupidity orthodox catholicism had descended, was firstly and generally that opinion among the devout and the philosophically uncommitted should (if not openly be set in favour of Marmontel) at least be neutralised and hardened respectively.

So much, in few words, for the reaction that Voltaire possibly desired on public opinion. But what of the equally, even more important reverse of the medal, and what particular aims did Voltaire have in mind concerning the Sorbonne and Marmontel himself?

In the case of the Sorbonne there is no difficulty in deciding what the basic aim was; it is clear and unequivocal. To attack, to browbeat, ridicule and discomfit religious infamy and its exponents were long term preoccupations that are so well-known in the general Voltairean context that any discussion of them here would obviously be superfluous. And yet, in terms of the nascent *affaire de Bélisaire* (which was far from being a long term investment), the necessarily immediate reaction that Voltaire hoped his broadly circulated anecdote would have on the Sorbonne itself is open to a certain amount of conjecture.

However, given the circumstances in which Marmontel seemed in grave danger of having to make some sort of submission and where philosophy could apparently stand in direct line of the consequences, Voltaire's intention is only open to two possible interpretations.

The probable and basic meaning to be put upon Voltaire's intervention is that he hoped the Sorbonne would quite simply be frightened into silence by the anecdote, and be forced to recognise that any further ill-treatment of Marmontel's sensible thesis

could only add to their own easily acquired fund of ridicule. In this sense, an abandonment of their repressive policy would have been of mutual advantage; purely because orthodox religion would thereby be spared further opprobrium, and correspondingly Marmontel would escape submission to their demands. Most certainly, when we see what hope Voltaire expressed in a letter to the marquis de Ximenès on 23 March, it would seem that this interpretation was present: 'Je me flatte que la Sorbonne s'accommodera avec le révérend père Marmontel pour la permission du petit carême de Bélisaire' (Best.13170).

But to an observer as acutely astute as Voltaire, it may quite conceivably have seemed that this might not be the case. However, whether the first line of attack succeeded or not, it may have appeared relatively clearly (from Marmontel's and Alembert's description of the Archbishop's attempt at conciliation in religious circles) that a goodly dose of ridicule administered to the highly sensitive faculty of theology could upset the somewhat uneasy equilibrium that the archbishop was trying to maintain. And it was relatively simple to gauge that, if the Sorbonne did not shy away from the dispute, the only other conceivable way in which they could react to a source of criticism that was utterly to Marmontel's advantage, would be to urge the archbishop (if his own sense of moderation was not also exasperated) to allow immediately a punishing reply in the form of the deserved public censure of *Bélisaire*.

In that case (if indeed such a hypothetical interpretation is valid —and we must admit that there is no supporting documentary basis) the Sorbonne would only be inviting disaster in different guise. For the condemnation of Marmontel's plea for toleration that they would inevitably wish and have to make would be singled out (as was to be the case) for a damaging philosophical attack. And naturally, under such circumstances, if Marmontel had subsequently to submit to orthodox directives, his compliance would pale into insignificance beside the formidable hue-and-cry that would be raised against the barbarity of the Faculty.

But if the situation and the corresponding alternatives open to the Sorbonne were somewhat vicious, Voltaire's own intervention which was prompted by the belief that Marmontel stood in great need of moral support and protection was no less ironic. In fact he was completely unaware—as was everyone—that the situation had meanwhile changed radically and that, after a very questionable start, Marmontel had not the slightest intention of submitting nor of signing anything, and that he even now had a very simple plan for emerging relatively spotless from his heavy-handed flirtation with the competent religious authorities. And, in few words, that plan was that he himself—strange though it may seem—should force the public censure of his own work.

To understand the progression leading to this decision, it is necessary to recapitulate and to give some discussion and interpretation of Marmontel's behaviour from the last week of February onwards. As we have already learned, Marmontel initially embarked upon negociations with the archbishop of Paris in order to justify himself conclusively, while at the same time he hoped that the Sorbonne would be robbed thereby of the indefensible pleasure of making a public censure. And at this period (towards the end of February 1767) it would appear that his sole aim was to persuade Beaumont that his credo had been advanced in the purest good faith, and that an appended explanation of his thesis would ultimately be sufficient reparation. But at this time, when the Sorbonne had already rejected such a plan out of hand, Marmontel had, in order precisely to make this really undemanding proposition an acceptable possibility, to make also an extremely favourable impression upon him who could order such a course of action. It was undoubtedly for this reason that he had made the particular promise to sign any retraction and profession of faith that the archbishop wished.

Upon reflection, such a promise was certainly given in the hope that a touching show of orthodox submission would make compliance with the promise unnecessary. And for so long as Beaumont remained the avuncular, understanding and moderate figure

that he believed he saw, Marmontel undoubtedly felt that he might indeed escape with no more penance than the previously suggested explanations. Nevertheless, if he sincerely estimated that his negotiations, coupled with almost abject humility, would smooth the path for this solution, a rapidly evolving situation was to make him realise equally rapidly that his plan (coupled with his estimation) was badly at fault, and extremely precarious. How, therefore, was he brought to understand that he had made a very grave tactical error?

At the end of February, while the majority of the Sorbonne was clamouring for the strictest possible measures, Beaumont—almost certainly remembering the scandal aroused five years previously by their joint treatment of Rousseau's *Emile*—was definitely not in favour of a public censure. And so long as orthodoxy remained divided upon the approach to adopt towards *Bélisaire*, the prevailing opinion, again in so far as Marmontel did not make a monumental blunder, would be that of the Archbishop. For this reason Marmontel almost certainly believed, rather naïvely, that with all the appearances of irreproachable good faith he could conclude business exclusively with Beaumont, who for his part would impose his findings on the Sorbonne.

The danger for Marmontel lay in his initial and faulty appreciation of the divided aims of the authorities. He had possibly deluded himself into believing that they were so obviously opposed as to be absolutely irreconcilable. And if he preferred to believe precisely that the archbishop would ride almost roughshod over the Sorbonne to impose his wishes (because in one interview he had apparently allowed Marmontel to reduce Riballier to silence),[24] Marmontel did not seem to recognise that this could nevertheless only lead to dissension within the church at the

[24] vii.308: 'Je ne tirai d'autre vengeance de cette insulte si violente, que de vous faire subir la peine d'en entendre la réponse devant un homme respectable, qui avait droit de nous juger. Vous l'entendîtes cette réponse, assez vive, s'il vous en souvient; vous l'entendîtes sans répliquer un mot; et votre silence me parut être l'effet de la confusion'.

very time, as in the philosophical party, when dissension was most undesirable. He should have foreseen that the archbishop, for all his moderation and willingness to understand had not made common cause with him to humiliate the Sorbonne. Or in other terms, Marmontel's common sense should have told him that Beaumont would surely seek to come to a working agreement with his colleagues expressly in order to avoid schism. In such particular circumstances it should have been quite obvious, at a very early date, that both orthodox parties would quite mutually make concessions; and that the resulting compromise concerning the action to be taken would, thanks to Beaumont's credit, certainly not be a censure, but that it would (given the temper of the Sorbonne) equally certainly involve far more than adding mere orthodox explanations to the xvth chapter.

During the last days of February, however, the intransigent attitude of the Sorbonne remained the same; and Marmontel—relying extremely heavily upon the archbishop's power and his understanding—had not yet perceived, it would seem, the possibility of a compromise. But on 1 March 1767, even though the demands of the Faculty had not changed at all, the result of their deliberation held at the assembly of the *prima mensis* was nevertheless to make a compromise inevitable. On 3 March, reporting again what was happening, Bachaumont (iii.150) wrote as follows:

Dans l'assemblée de la Faculté de Théologie tenue avant-hier le syndic a rendu compte du roman politique et moral de Bélisaire, de M. Marmontel. Après avoir parlé avec éloge des talens et du style, ainsi que de la réputation de l'auteur, il a relevé les écarts qu'il s'est permis contre la foi catholique dans le quinzième chapitre de cet ouvrage. Le syndic a fait ensuite lecture de la lettre écrite par M. Marmontel à M. l'archevêque, pour lui déclarer qu'il signera la profession de foi qui lui sera proposée, et qu'il donnera toutes les explications qu'on voudra exiger.

La Faculté, qui a éprouvé par le passé que les explications données en pareil cas par M. de Montesquieu au sujet du livre de

l'Esprit des Lois, et par M. de Buffon sur l'Histoire naturelle, avaient été insuffisantes pour réparer le scandale donné, insiste sur la censure de Bélisaire. En conséquence elle a nommé des commissaires pour faire agréer à M. l'archevêque le désir de la Faculté et lui faire connaître la nécessité de la censure, pour, sur la réponse de M. l'archevêque prendre une détermination.

To the subsequent enlightenment of Marmontel, the official deputation sent by the Sorbonne to confer with the archbishop did not succeed in its aim but was in fact led to sympathise with his policy—to be followed several days later by the majority of the Faculty. On 15 March, reporting the sequence of events since the *prima mensis*, Bachaumont (iii.156) again noted:

Suivant la délibération de la Faculté de Théologie, le doyen, le syndic et les huit commissaires se sont rendus chez M. l'archevêque il y a quelques jours. Ce prélat leur a déclaré que, dans l'affaire de M. Marmontel, il ne cherchait que le plus grand bien de la religion, et qu'il s'en rapportait entièrement au jugement de la Faculté.

En conséquence, la Faculté a mis en délibération s'il convenait, pour parvenir au plus grand bien, de faire une censure en forme, ou de se contenter d'explications. Il a été décidé que ce dernier était le parti le plus expédient, et qu'on pourrait joindre au quinzième chapitre une explication très-théologique, qui corrigerait ce qui se trouve de contraire à la religion dans ce chapitre.

Les commissaires doivent s'assembler pour concerter et faire le projet de cette explication théologique, qui, après avoir été accepté par M. Marmontel, sera présentée à l'assemblée de la Faculté du primâ mensis.

The information that Bachaumont gives at this stage, important though it undoubtedly is, is ultimately, however, misleading once again, and on the same point. The Sorbonne had definitely decided, acting presumably upon the arguments and advice of the deputation, to accept a moderate solution to the xvth chapter in

the form of a theological explanation. But the projected explanation, despite the moderation that it seemed to herald was, from the very beginning, meant by the Faculty to be nothing less than the public retraction that Marmontel had promised to accept and that Alembert, and others, for example, had very possibly feared[25].

Meanwhile, Marmontel had understood, perhaps from the moment that the unexpected compromise had seemed inevitable, that any notion he had had of escaping at his own price had been fallacious. Nevertheless, to what precise extent that notion had been fallacious, he did not realise until he was invited to Conflans by the archbishop in mid-March for the first of several meetings in order to answer the queries and objections of the eight *commissaires* who had been instructed to examine the xvth chapter with a view to preparing the orthodox antidote. Needless to say, as had happened in the earlier interviews with Riballier, the theologians paid little attention to Marmontel's honestly proferred explanations; and falsifying in their turn the sense of his credo and of the *mémoire* (or written justification) that he had previously submitted to them following the wishes of the archbishop, they themselves presumably advanced with some vigour the same harsh views concerning his good faith and intentions.

Thus, from the start, the representatives of the Sorbonne made it clear that the retraction they were to elaborate would take no consideration whatsoever of the defence that had been advanced. It would, therefore, certainly be an extremely comprehensive and demanding document which damned the whole of the xvth chapter, and to which Marmontel would be expected to bow without reserve.

But when the culprit himself so evidently believed wholeheartedly in the ideas that he had advanced, this prospect was, to say the least, unacceptable. And, at this point, inwardly smarting from the continual rebuffs and affronts to his dignity and his

25 Bachaumont himself did call it so, when a fortnight later and re-informed of the situation, he again recorded the most important events (iii.166-167).

moral status as an *honnête homme*, Marmontel completely changed his plan of action. He now began to manœuvre inexorably towards that public censure he had previously wished to avoid.

During the discussions, however, no matter how incensed he was by the behaviour of his judges, no matter how much justifiable disgust he felt for their narrow beliefs so dogmatically advanced, Marmontel had of necessity to appear docile. The very temper of the deputation made him aware that his own sentiments, suddenly defended with equal intransigence and every sign of mutiny, could only lead to the suspension of negotiations and an immediate public censure. And to give the Sorbonne the excuse to adopt such a course at this point would have been highly unsatisfactory. Admittedly Marmontel was now bent on a censure, but only on his own terms and at his own convenience.

A censure, at this early stage, would have meant quite simply an out-of-hand condemnation of all the propositions in the xvth chapter to which orthodoxy took exception. The disadvantage of this sort of general censure was, in Marmontel's opinion, that it would ultimately resemble the usually stolid scholastic disputes, where theological chicanery vied with theological chicanery to find a record number of heresies. Such a prospect was hardly tempting; therefore while the *commissaires* were conducting their examination, and were advancing through the xvth chapter and the *mémoire*, interpreting, falsifying, arguing and questioning, Marmontel was backing away, keeping his habitual appearance of humility in order not to arouse suspicion, towards a solidly fortified position.

Although we do not know in detail how any of these conferences were conducted, nor even how many there were, we do know that the one destined to be the last had been prepared by Marmontel with cunning and secrecy. For pre-armed with a further document of self-justification (given the title of *Exposé des motifs qui m'empêchent de souscrire à l'intolérance civile* (vii.319-326), he was waiting patiently for the learned doctors to reach the relevant pages both in *Bélisaire* and his memoir, and for them to

demand verbal explanation of his dearest theories negating intolerance, and the imposition of faith by force and persecution. At this point his general intention (which we can glimpse from later happenings) was undoubtedly to refuse verbally any modification of these views. But what did he imagine that the outcome was to be? We suspect (as in fact happened) that Marmontel hoped for the following progression: in the first place a refusal, coming unexpectedly after days of humility, accord and seeming good faith could not fail to create a shocked atmosphere; following hard upon this, the presentation of his *Exposé*—which was couched in unequivocal terms—would reinforce the dismay and indignation to which the theologians were at that moment subject; and foreseeing a general loss of equanimity at this juncture, Marmontel was presumably sure that he could goad at least one of the more irascible members of the deputation to demand (upon pain of public censure) his submission to their opinion; but in such radical terms as to make their opinion unquestionably revolting.

Whereupon he himself could and would break off negotiations. A rupture on this point of somewhat bitter actuality, made known publicly, would be seen not only to his credit, but also be seen to have been made with every justification. For here it would no longer be a question of conflicting opinions on fine theological points, where the doctors naturally had the upper hand, but a question of good sense and humanity, where one did not have to be learned to decide who was right[26].

At the end of March 1767 it would, however, appear that the plan had not yet been put into effect. For, according to Bachaumont (iii.166-167) quoting on 31st, Marmontel was still the paragon of humility, and even more, the indebted disciple of Voltaire whose *Anecdote sur Bélisaire* had just found its way into public circulation: 'Tandis que la Faculté de Théologie est occupée à

[26] Voltaire had used, and was again to use this particular device in his *facéties* in defence of Marmontel. Like his disciple, Voltaire was to make an intricate politico-theological problem into a simple matter of public concern.

dresser la rétraction que doit signer M. Marmontel, et que celui-ci attend avec une foi humble tout ce que l'on proposera à sa docilité, M. de Voltaire s'égaie et vient de répandre des Anecdotes sur Bélisaire, espèce de pamphlet, où il verse le ridicule à grands flots sur qui il appartient. Il y prodigue une foule de citations des pères de l'église, des docteurs, des casuistes, qui appuient les assertions avancées dans le chapitre xv du Bélisaire tant critiqué, et qui a jeté un si grand scandale dans l'église.'

Despite the fact that a close comparison between documentary sources and Bauchaumont's reporting shows that he was very often informed with amazing rapidity, the initial information given on this precise and important occasion is almost certainly several days old. Because we know that the retraction which was obviously being composed parallel with the results of the negotiations must have been nearing completion several days previously. There is reason to believe this since the refusal that Marmontel had prepared on the final subject of intolerance brought about the unofficial, but quite obvious decision to censure at the *prima mensis* (*i.e.* 1 April 1767).

Therefore it was towards the last days of March that Marmontel was preparing to put his seal of disapproval on the Sorbonne's demands. But if he had previously had any tremor of misgivings about the effect that his blunt refusal might possibly have upon his own person, he was certainly emboldened and brought to view the future with reasonable equanimity by the precious moral support of Voltaire, the existence of whose anecdote he was almost certainly aware. Here, then, we take the occasion to allow Marmontel to recount in his own words that crucial, last conference from the moment the archbishop asked for a retraction of his sentiments on civil intolerance (ii.25-27):

'Oui, mon cher monsieur Marmontel, me dit l'archevêque, sur bien des points j'ai été content de votre bonne foi et de votre docilité; mais il y a un article sur lequel j'exige de vous une rétraction authentique et formelle; c'est celui de la tolérance. — Si

monseigneur veut bien, lui dis-je, jeter les yeux sur quelques lignes que j'ai écrites ce matin, il y verra nettement expliqué quelle est, à ce sujet, mon opinion personnelle, et quels en sont les motifs.' Je lui présentai cette note, que vous trouverez imprimée à la suite de *Bélisaire*. Il la lut en silence, et la fit passer aux docteurs. 'Bon! dirent-ils, des lieux communs, rebattus mille fois, mille fois réfutés, qui sont le rebut des écoles. — Vous traitez, leur dis-je, avec bien du mépris l'autorité des pères de l'église et celle de saint Paul, dont mes motifs sont appuyés.' Ils me répondirent 'que les écrits des pères de l'église étaient un arsenal où tous les partis trouvaient des armes, et que le passage de saint Paul que j'alléguais ne prouvait rien'.

'Eh bien! leur demandai-je, puisque votre autorité seule doit faire loi, que me demandez-vous? — Le droit du glaive, me dirent-ils, pour exterminer l'hérésie, l'irréligion, l'impiété, et tout soumettre au joug de la foi.'

C'était là que je les attendais, pour me retirer en bon ordre et me tenir retranché dans un poste où l'on ne pourrait m'attaquer. *Praemunitum, atque ex omni parte causae septum* (de Or. I. 3). Je leur répondis donc que le glaive était l'une de ces armes *charnelles* que saint Paul avait réprouvées lorsqu'il avait dit: *Arma militae nostrae non carnalia sunt*; et, à ces mots, j'allais sortir. Le prélat me retint, et, me serrant les mains entre les siennes, me conjura, avec un pathétique vraiment risible, de souscrire à ce dogme atroce. 'Non, monseigneur, lui dis-je, si je l'avais signé, je croirais avoir trempé ma plume dans le sang; je croirais avoir approuvé toutes les cruautés commises au nom de la religion. — Vous attachez donc, me dit Le Fèvre avec son insolence doctorale, une grande importance et une grande autorité à votre opinion? — Je sais, lui dis-je, monsieur l'abbé, que mon autorité n'est rien; mais ma conscience est quelque chose; et c'est elle qui, au nom de l'humanité, au nom de la religion même, me défend d'approuver les persécutions. *Defendenda religio est, non occidendo, sed moriendo*; *non saevitiâ sed patientiâ . . . si sanguine, si tormentis, si malo religionem defendere velis; jam non defendetur, sed polluetur atque violabitur.*

C'est le sentiment de Lactance, c'est aussi celui de Tertullien et celui de saint Paul, et vous me permettrez de croire que ces gens-là vous valaient bien.

— Allons, dit-il à ses confrères, il n'en faut plus parler. Monsieur veut être censuré; il le sera.' Ainsi finirent nos conférences. Ce qui m'en était précieux, c'était le résultat que j'en avais tiré. Ce n'était plus ici de petites chicanes théologiques où j'aurais été exposé aux arguties de l'école, c'était un point de controverse réduit aux termes les plus simples, les plus frappans, les plus tranchans. 'Ils ont voulu, pouvais-je dire, me faire reconnaître le droit de forcer la croyance, d'y employer le glaive, les tortures, les échafauds et les bûchers; ils ont voulu me faire approuver qu'on prêchât l'Evangile le poignard à la main; et j'ai refusé de signer cette doctrine abominable. Voilà pourquoi l'abbé Le Fèvre m'a déclaré que je serais censuré sans pitié.' Ce résumé, que je fis répandre à la ville, à la cour, au parlement, dans les conseils, rendit la Sorbonne odieuse; en même temps mes amis travaillèrent à la rendre ridicule, et je m'en reposai sur eux.

In describing, exactly thirty years after the event, how at this point his adversaries reacted, Marmontel could certainly remember the main outlines of the discussion and its atmosphere. There is, however, proof of a very positive nature that his memory did not in fact serve him as faithfully as the text seems to indicate. In the first instance he very obviously transcribed many of his supposed verbal objections to the 'doctoral insolence' of the *abbé* Le Fèvre either word for word or approximately from the *Exposé*[27]. This is, of course, neither here nor there in precise terms

[27] for example: the following quotations from the *Exposé* (vii.326)' 'Arma militae nostrae non carnalia sunt;. . . si je l'avais signé, je croirais avoir trempé ma plume dans le sang'; p.325: 'Je sais . . . que mon autorité n'est rien; mais ma conscience est quelque chose; et c'est elle qui, au nom de l'humanité, au nom de la religion même, me défend d'approuver les persécutions'; p.325; 'si sanguine, si tormentis, si malo religionem defendere velis, jam non defendetur, sed polluetur atque violabitur'; etc., etc.

of the outcome (although it is, incidentally speaking, evidence of Marmontel's unfailing partiality in the Memoirs for making himself appear more imposing than he perhaps was)[28]. It would, however, be interesting to know the true verbal nature of the dispute merely in order to judge whether the representatives of the Sorbonne were indeed as bloodthirsty and as completely reactionary as Marmontel would have us believe. But beyond this point (to which there is no answer), it does become patently obvious (when we consult Grimm) that the wishes expressed by the archbishop have been slightly falsified to Marmontel's advantage. Because we find that, far from subscribing to the atrocious doctrine that the deputation supposedly advanced, he was still to a great extent the moderate figure that he had been in this affair for over a month. According to Grimm, who has very possibly the merit of recording at first hand Marmontel's own current descriptions, Beaumont emerged from the final conference in slightly better light than would appear: 'L'archevêque de Paris n'a pas certainement une âme dure et farouche. On a souvent vanté sa charité, sa douceur, mille vertus qui caractérisent un cœur plein d'humanité, et je n'ai nulle peine à y croire. Cependant ce prélat a voulu obliger l'auteur de *Bélisaire* de reconnaître deux points: 1° le droit qu'ont les souverains de forcer les consciences en faveur de la vraie religion; 2° le devoir d'user de ce droit avec modération' (vii.342).

The third and most serious objection to the description is that Marmontel would have us believe (again enhancing his rôle) that he *himself* had mortified the Sorbonne to the extent of making any further action on their part, and on the basis of his promises, impossible. This was very definitely not the case. Admittedly he had been responsible for the rupture of negotiations, and he did succeed in broadcasting his difference of opinion in strict terms of civil intolerance. But in the memoirs he passes over in complete

[28] judgements on the veracity of the memoirs have been varied, but all are in agreement on Marmontel's evident desire to appear the principal character in any situation. See, for example, Lenel, p.6; P. Meister, *Charles Duclos* (Genève 1956), p.76.

silence the irrefutable fact that the religious authorities nevertheless expressly demanded from him a declaration. For under no circumstances, even given Marmontel's uncompromising stand concerning their own document, had the Sorbonne written off their desire for a declaration of retraction as a useless investment[29]. In fact, in the unpublished letter to Voltaire, Marmontel refers to it specifically.

Thus, here is the obvious place to quote the text of this letter, to attempt its dating and finally to discuss its importance in terms of the *Affaire de Bélisaire*. First, the contents of the letter (private collection):

que ne vous dois je pas mon illustre maitre d'avoir pris si genereusement ma defense, et tiré pour moi de votre carquois cette fléche du ridicule qui fait trembler les mechans et les Sots! la sorbonne va rugir comme pompignan des qu'elle en sentira l'atteinte. *Horet lateri letalis arundo.* Mais quelle que soit sa rage, vous m'avez fait un grand bien en attachant le mepris a la persecution que j'eprouve de la part de ce troupeau de fanatiques qui

[29] two supplementary sources of information on this point must be given. Firstly Alembert said in a letter to Voltaire of 6 April 1767 (Best. 13195): 'Cette vermine est une vraie plaie d'Egypte, et qui par malheur a l'air de durer longtemps. Ils sont actuellement aux trousses de Marmontel, qui je crois, s'est trop avancé avec eux, et qui aura de la peine à s'en tirer. Ils ont écrit un gros volume de censures pour expliquer ou plutôt pour embrouiller leur barbare et ridicule doctrine'. The second is to be found in the preamble of the *Censure* (already quoted), and obviously refers to the desired declaration: 'Il ne nous reste qu'à former des vœux pour que l'auteur exécute la promesse réitérée qu'il a faite de vive voix et par écrit, de rétracter ouvertement et sans peine toutes les erreurs qu'on remarquerait dans son ouvrage. Cette espérance a porté la joie dans nos cœurs; elle a modéré la douleur que nous causait la nécessité où nous nous trouvions de faire une censure sévère et rigoureuse, mais juste et indispensable de son livre. S'il est fidèle à ses engagemens, la religion le recevra avec transport, elle récompensera la victoire qu'il aura remportée sur lui-même, par le sentiment délicieux de la paix intérieure; elle proposera sa soumission pour modèle à ceux qui auraient eu le malheur de s'écarter, comme lui, du sentier de la vérité' (pp.xxiii-xxiv).

n'entendent raison sur rien. ils me demandent une declaration[30]; je la ferai telle qu'il me convient. Soyez tranquile sur mon honneur et sur celui de la philosophie. on veut que je modifie mes sentimens sur la tolerance civile. j'ai bien déclaré que je n'en ferai rien. je serai ferme sur cet article.

Si j'avois prévu que vous auriez la bonté de faire rire aux depens de mes censeurs, je vous aurois fourni encore des armes. le pere *Bonhomme*, cordelier, lun des commissaires nommés pour lexamen de mon livre etoit un personnage a mettre sur la scene. cest de tous les docteurs de leglise celui qui vuide le mieux un broc de vin; et son visage rubicon annonce l'ardeur de Son zele. il est bon de savoir aussi que la Sorbonne est divisée en molinistes et en jansenistes et que ceux cy pretendent que les bonnes œuvres et les vertus des infideles sont vicieuses devant dieu et autant d'offenses pour lui[31]. ce parti est le dominant depuis l'expulsion des jesuites. en sorte quil y auroit une excellente provinciale a faire entre un docteur janseniste, un docteur moliniste, et moi, ces messieurs n'etant point d'accord sur ce quils me demanderoient, et finissant notre conferance par sarracher les cheveux. vous Savez de plus que . . . . . .[32] Sest fait janseniste, et s'est mis a la tete de mes persecuteurs . . .[33]

je joins ici quelques passages des theologiens et des peres dont vous ferez usage Si cela vous convient. cest trop vous occuper de moi. parlons de vous mon illustre maitre. je vois avec une sensible joye que la lecture des scythes fait assez generalement la meme impression sur les esprits, que la piéce a faite sur moi a la representation; et quelques touches de votre main dans le role d'indatire et dans celui d'obeïde en decideront le succès.

[30] Marmontel had first put *explication*, but had crossed it out and replaced it by *déclaration* which is written above.

[31] sentence originally carried on with *et que*, then last two words deleted.

[32] here the equivalent of one whole line has been obliterated with a close circular movement of the pen.

[33] at this point the equivalent of three whole lines has been deleted in the same manner.

c'est bien dommage que Robert covel ne soit pas un personnage plus interessant pour paris. le premier chant du petit poeme de la guerre civile (le seul que j'ai pu lire jusqu'a present) est plein de gaité et d'excellentes plaisanteries. je vous avertis que les genevois en sont piqués au vif, et quils se proposent de faire cabale contre la premiere piéce que vous ferez jouer en suisse. je le tiens d'une genevoise.

je vois partir notre ami chabanon avec bien du regret de ne pouvoir le suivre. quel avantage pour lui, pour Mr. de la harpe, et pour Mr. champfort daller travailler sous vos yeux! et quel plaisir pour le patriarche de la litterature d'attirer dans Sa retraite les plus heureux talens, de les cultiver de ses mains, et de revivre dans son ouvrage.

jouissez mon illustre maitre du bonheur d'etre bienfaisant. il est bien digne de votre ame.

Marmontel

mille respects a Mad^e denis. mes complimens a Mr. dela harpe.

The main problem, as regards the dating of this text, springs from the fact that though the information given is varied, it is not specific enough. And indeed, to attempt to say on which day exactly this letter was written would verge on the impossible. However, since the very general nature of the subject under discussion does not make strictly accurate dating necessary, we may dispense with protracted interpretations and advance with the minimum of delay the probable period of 31 March—3 April 1767—the latter date, depending ultimately, of course, entirely upon how pressingly grateful Marmontel felt for Voltaire's intervention in the form of the *Anecdote sur Bélisaire.*

In the letter his gratitude is without any doubt expressed for this *Anecdote.* However, since it was first noted in circulation by Bachaumont on 31 March, Marmontel's reference to the Sorbonne's coming discomfort, once it became aware of the pamphlet, cannot have been made more than a day or so after that of Bachaumont, given the probable rapidity of its circulation and

corresponding denunciation. This consideration, if it is correct, takes us towards 3 April. But on the other hand, if it is incorrect and if the process was slower than we might believe, the letter could quite reasonably have been written even several days after 3 April. And it would be well to bear in mind that this final date is open to extension. On the other hand, the letter could have been written at the very earliest only on 31 March, since Marmontel speaks of the last interview and of his blunt refusal to modify his sentiments on intolerance, which was again made at the very end of that particular month.

Should there be any doubt about this latter tentative dating, based upon an objection that Marmontel may also have given a hard and fast refusal to modify his views on intolerance at a much earlier date, *during* the course of negociation, then the reference to the performance of *Les Scythes*, should make it reasonably clear that this cannot be the case[34].

It remains at this stage to give some explanation of the importance of this communication in terms of the affair.

In the first instance it must be stressed that the information contained in the letter, which was somewhat reinforced by that of Alembert given on 6 April, could only make Voltaire more highly aware that Marmontel was still standing in a very exposed and difficult position. Doubtless the Master had much faith in the disciple's strength and tenacity; he had known him intimately since 1745, and in particular he was highly aware of one certain aspect of his character which would be of great advantage in the present situation. For as far back as 1748 Voltaire had been forced to qualify Marmontel as a 'têtu de Limosin' (M.i.232). He was, therefore, undoubtedly sure that Marmontel would continue to refuse any modification of his sentiments on intolerance. And in the same way he was probably equally certain that, if the disciple had stated explicitly that the declaration expected from him would

[34] *Les Scythes* was acted for the first time at the Comédie française on 26 March 1767, and thereafter was acted only three more times, on 28 and 30 March, and 1 April.

be given as he thought fit, the declaration would be penned to Marmontel's entire satisfaction without any orthodox interference.

But it must, nevertheless have been evident to Voltaire—despite this precise knowledge—that the Sorbonne also had no apparent intention of abandoning their position either. And so long as they went about their censure and expected a declaration to their liking, Marmontel was, according to Alembert, still in some danger.

Naturally Voltaire was aware that the Faculty had embarked on its censure in an atmosphere that he had definitely made uncongenial. Yet he knew, given the present embittered situation where the Faculty would continue unswervingly towards its avowed goal, that one isolated pamphlet could be no more than a mild irritant which could serve no lasting purpose. Correspondingly he knew full well that Marmontel could not really vindicate himself and that he was in no position whatsoever, no matter how much the idea might tempt him, to manage his own campaign of ridicule directed against narrow-minded orthodoxy. Therefore, as one might reasonably expect in this century—where (as Paul Hazard stated, in referring to orthodox religious activities and their opponents): 'Aucun pas ne fut fait sans provoquer une démarche contraire'[35]—Voltaire returned to the attack.

He now had at his disposal, in Marmontel's letter, supplementary information about the negociations and their outcome. And this information was to serve as the basis for the *Seconde anecdote sur Bélisaire*. In passing it may be added that if Marmontel had any particular wish to see a faithful reflection in pamphlet form of the tone and way in which this information had been given, he was destined to be somewhat disappointed. His powers of imagination and his feeling for humour were definitely not among his gifts and qualities; and his proposal that Voltaire consider writing a

[35] *La Pensée européenne au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris 1963), p.84.

provinciale, in which the learned doctors confer with him at cross-purposes and finally tear out their hair in exasperation bordered on the adolescent. Fortunately, disregarding completely Marmontel's suggested approach, Voltaire chose to use the data in his own inimitable way.

It is not our intention to discuss the *Seconde anecdote*, although this is not to negate its importance by any means. But as it made it appearance in the second phase of the *Bélisaire* affair, an examination of it in the strict context of the present article, which is concerned wholly with the genesis, would be misplaced. Very briefly, the importance of the anecdote must be anticipated in precise terms of the letter, because the very importance of the letter itself is that it marked the decisive turning point in the affair.

Up to this date nothing is more clear than that Marmontel was in splendid isolation. And apart from the support evident in the first anecdote which appears to have been circulating in Paris at the end of March, it would seem that Marmontel had been standing entirely alone from the very beginning, conducting his own defence as best he could, while the rest of the philosophical fraternity were apparently content to look on. In theory they were certainly in a slightly better position to vindicate Marmontel than he himself; but in practice it would seem that they afforded him little or no concrete support at all. However, his letter to Voltaire was to change the whole situation radically.

In giving a supplementary amount of revealing information, which was equally disturbing, and by making an ill-disguised appeal for help, Marmontel was to ensure the reaction on Voltaire, and through him to great extent on inactive philosophical opinion in the capital. As soon as Voltaire became aware that the Sorbonne meant to issue a public damnation of the xvth chapter along with its plea for civil toleration, he very rapidly and completely assumed Marmontel's defence with all the spirit of which he was capable. And in composing his *Seconde anecdote* he was to set the tone for the quarrel and to indicate with greater clarity the attitude

that the partisans of enlightenment should actively adopt towards the faculty of theology.

From this date onwards, with the imminent mobilisation of the party—acting on the strength of Voltaire's moral authority and their own mounting sense of indignation—as writers of pamphlets, composers of scurrilous poems, links in the chain of the dissemination of printed propaganda, or merely as informants, the Bélisaire affair was to become the pretext for a renewed and embittered dispute of imposing and unparalleled proportions between the *philosophes* and the church; but a dispute nevertheless in which Voltaire was to play by far the greatest rôle. And a dispute where ultimately the complete rout of the Sorbonne and its apologists, with its corresponding effect on the official policy of the contemporary government concerning Protestants, is to be seen as a personal triumph for Voltaire.

To conclude it must be said that the *Affaire de Bélisaire* which has been so long forgotten or sadly underestimated deserves to be resurrected and counted once more among Voltaire's active contributions to the defence and spread of liberal ideas.

La Harpe quarrels with the actors: unpublished correspondence

edited by Christopher Todd

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The letters published here come from various sources. By far the greatest number are printed, along with their replies, from manuscripts in the archives of the Comédie française. Four of these were published in 1837-1838 in the *Revue rétrospective*, but are included here so as not to interrupt the development of La Harpe's quarrel with the actors. He was somewhat reluctant to join the Société des auteurs et compositeurs dramatiques when it was set up in 1777, but by 1790 he had become one of its spokesmen.

Fragments of La Harpe's correspondence with Paul Michel Hennin were published (in their customary very incomplete and very inaccurate manner, to which no further reference will be made) by Lucien Perey and Gaston Maugras in *La Vie intime de Voltaire aux Délices et à Ferney* (Paris 1885). The complete texts are given here for the first time from manuscripts in the library of the Institut de France and the Bibliothèque municipale of Lille. These letters serve to supplement Voltaire's correspondence on the affair of the stolen manuscripts in 1768.

Two letters come from the Bodleian library in Oxford. One of these illustrates La Harpe's well-known admiration for Necker, and the other deals with the financial difficulties that La Harpe experienced in later life.

Four letters are published from manuscripts in the Archives nationales. These also contain interesting biographical details.

The remaining letters come from the archives of the Académie française (photocopies of most are in my possession), the Archives de la ville de Reims, the Bibliothèque municipale of Châteauroux, and the Bibliothèque nationale.

In presenting these letters, I have followed the principles adopted by Theodore Besterman in his edition of *Voltaire's correspondence*. Each letter has notes describing the manuscript and its history; editions, if any; textual notes; and a general

commentary, where necessary. The original spelling has been preserved. Some punctuation has been altered to make the sense clear. Some capitals and accents have been added, but no accent has been changed. Many of the letters are printed from rough drafts, and certain abbreviations have been resolved. Where this has been done, it is shown between square brackets.

I should like to express my thanks to the librarians and archivists of the institutions named above. A special word of thanks must go to madame Sylvie Chevalley of the Comédie française archives. Without her help, the bulk of these letters could not have been published. The file on La Harpe in the Comédie française also contains many other documents, invaluable for the study of La Harpe. Some of these are to be found here in the commentaries. Four of them are printed as appendixes at the end. I should like to acknowledge gratefully the help given me by madame P. Cavailler of the Archives de Seine et Marne, by Mr O. R. Taylor of Queen Mary College in the University of London, and the permission granted to me by maîtres Pierre Champenois, Albert Crémery, Léon Dufour, Robert Gaullier and Denis Laurent to consult the minutes of acts belonging to their offices.

After preparing these letters for publication, I discovered that letter 15, La Harpe to Dureau de La Malle, had already been printed by J. Delort in *Mes Voyages autour de Paris* (Paris 1821).

C. T.

1. La Harpe to Pierre Michel Hennin

[September/October 1767][a]

Monsieur,

Des affaires de famille m'obligent de ramener incessamment ma femme à Paris pour le mariage d'une de ses sœurs. Elle voudrait bien ainsi que moi avoir l'honneur de vous faire ses adieux. Si vous pouviez nous envoyer demain sur le midi une voiture, nous serions à vos ordres pour la journée.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très respectueusement, monsieur, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Institut de France, MS 1265, f.346).

EXTUAL NOTES

[a] the letter is dated in another hand 'Ferney, le . . . 1767'.

COMMENTARY

La Harpe left Ferney in the latter part of October 1767 (Best.13547, 13611, 13861). However, according to Grimm (*Corr. litt.*, 15 April 1768, viii.48), Marie Marthe de La Harpe remained at Ferney. Moreover, neither of her sisters was ever married. Marie Hélène Monmayeux died single in December 1774 (Minutier central des notaires: Etude XCI[xx] 1122, Inventaire après décès du 6 décembre 1774). Marie Louise Monmayeux died on 12 January 1777, having taken over her father's café in the rue de Condé (*Annonces, affiches et avis divers*, 23 January 1777, p.111, and Minutier central; Etude XCI[xx] 1147-1148, Testament du 11 janvier & Inventaire après décès du 13 février 1777). Was La Harpe referring to the marriage of a brother-in-law? All official acts concerning the Monmayeux family were unfortunately destroyed in the fire of 1871, but at least one of Marie Marthe's brothers, Claude Monmayeux, was married before 1777 (Minutier central: Etude XCI[xx] 1180, Partage et liquidation des biens des Sr. et Dlle. Monmayeux, du 18 septembre 1779).

2. La Harpe to [Pierre Michel Hennin]

à Paris, ce 21 mars [1768]

Monsieur,

Vous avés été surement aussi surpris que nous des événements qui ont suivi nôtre départ. Personne ne connoît encore ici la

conduite de M. de Voltaire, ni quels motifs il a pû avoir pour se séparer de tout ce qui devait lui être le plus cher. En savés-vous plus que les autres? Quant à moi, ce qui m'afflige le plus c'est de le voir livré à un moine, à un ex-jésuite, le plus bas de ses valets et le plus dangereux des imposteurs. C'est un estrange spectacle pour l'Europe que de voir Mr de Voltaire tête-à-tête avec le Père Adam.

Je n'ai pas oublié vos projets pour les voyages de Paris, et j'ose espérer que vous voudrés bien vous souvenir un peu de nous dans ce païs où l'on ne se souvient guères que de soi. Quant à nous, nous avons été trop sensibles à vos bontés, et trop charmés de vôtre prière pour oublier nos plaisirs. Nous les regretterons longtems. Ma femme vous présente ses très humbles civilités.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec le plus respectueux attachement,

Monsieur,

Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Bibliothèque municipale, Lille, MS 853, f.123). Offered by Charavay, *Bulletin*, no.19853.

COMMENTARY

For a further letter from La Harpe to Hennin, dated 14 April 1768, see R. L. Hawkins 'Unpublished French letters of the 18th century', *Romanic review* (New York 1930), xxi.7-10.

3. *Pierre Michel Hennin to La Harpe*

[7 April 1768][a]

Il n'y a pas quatre jours, monsieur, que j'ai la solution du problème qui vous a embarrassé ainsi que tout Paris. Elle est étrange, soyez en sûr, et ne me citez pas. Depuis que Ferney est vide, j'ai vu quelque fois le Patron qui a voulu vendre sa terre et ne l'a pas fait et ne le fera, j'espère, pas. Croiriez-vous que j'ai eu à deffendre votre cause vis-à-vis de lui et que vous m'avez coûté plusieurs lettres. Je vous conterai tout cela à mon premier voyage qui sera, j'espère, au mois d'octobre.

Vous sçaurez, sans doute, que M. de Voltaire a fait ses Pâques, rendu le pain bénit et même harangué les paysans. Qu'il plante, arrange, pour voir très peu de monde, désole ses domestiques, et n'a pas l'air content, quoiqu'il se porte très bien. Je vous avouë que sa solitude m'inquiète autant que ses ennemis de Paris. On imprime ce Poëme de la Guerre de Genève[b] qui va faire ici un tapage dont vous n'avez pas d'idée. Ce n'est pas le sort du Pays d'entendre la plaisanterie, et déjà chacun en parle avec amertume.

Nos querelles sont, dit-on, finies. Je n'en crois rien. Ce peuple hargneux s'est fourni des moyens de tracasser *in externum* et ne tardera pas à en faire usage, d'ailleurs, aucun raccomodem[ent], pas même à l'intérieur. Les natifs et les représentants [se] haissent et se font aussi mauvaise mine que par le passé. Vous sçavez comme je nage dans ce bourbier et quelles ressources je me ménage contre l'ennuy. Nous avons cru perdre la G[l] Beaumont[1], elle est en convalescence.

Chacun se dispose à aller à la campagne. Je ne serai pas des derniers à [me] transporter à mon jardin pour y vivre le plus doucement qu'il me sera possible jusqu'au moment où je pourrai m'acheminer vers votre bonne ville. Vous ne pouvez pas douter que du plaisir que j'aurai de vous y revoir ainsi que Mad[e] de la Harpe.

J'espère qu'elle et vous me compterez toujours au nombre des personnes qui vous sont le plus sincèrement attachées. C'est avec ces sentiments que j'ay l'h[onneur] d'être, M[onsieur].

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Institut de France, MS 1265, f.347).

EDITIONS

Perey-Maugras, p.421.

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 is dated in another hand 'à Genève, le 7 avril 1768'. [b] crossed out in MS1: 'qui va soulever toute Genève'.

COMMENTARY

[1] mme Elie de Beaumont; the title was probably affectionate.

4. Pierre Michel Hennin to La Harpe

[25 April 1768][a]

Je me ferais un plaisir, m[onsieur], de vous instruire des détails dont vous paroissiez être anxieux; mais je ne veux pas être le premier à les écrire.

Le malin vieillard ne convient pas qu'il s'ennuye quelque fois, je crois m'en être apperçu et j'attens quelque occasion pour le prendre sur le fait. De là à le faire revenir sur ses pas il y a encore loin, je l'essayerai cependant et je voudrois bien pouvoir en porter la nouvelle à Paris où j'espère toujours aller vers la fin d'octobre.

Je n'ai rien vu dans la manière dont M. de V. m'a parlé de vous, qui prouvait autre chose sinon qu'il avoit voulu à toute force être seul. Il travaille plus que jamais et même à un grand ouvrage. Je ne sçais pas encore ce que c'est[1].

Sa communion n'a fait fortune nulle part. Vous sçavez sans doute ses démêlés à ce sujet avec l'Evêque d'Annecy[2]. Nos pères seroient bien étonnés s'ils voyaient combien on s'affecte peu de toutes ces choses dans ce siècle tranchant.

Je crois pour moy que les gens sensés ne doivent pas encore regarder la cause des Prêtres comme perdue sans retour, parce que, s'ils se retournaient, malheur au premier rang des poursuivans actuels.

On s'amuse assés dans nos cantons. Nous avons des fêtes de divers genres et, si cela dure, dans trois ou quatre ans la gaieté pourra s'établir sur les bords du lac.

[b]Adieu, M[onsieur], ne doutez pas, je vous prie, du plaisir que j'aurai de vous revoir, nous ne manquerons pas de sujets de conversation. Celui qui m'intéressera le plus sera votre situation actuelle et future, et je me flatte de n'avoir pas besoin de protestations pour vous assurer du désir que j'ai de vous revoir heureux, ainsi que du très sincère attachement, &c.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Institut de France, MS 1265, f.348).

EDITIONS

Perey-Maugras, p.421.

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 is dated in another hand 'à Genève 25 avril 1768' with '4 juillet' crossed out. [b] crossed out on MS1: 'J'espère toujours, M., avoir le plaisir de vous revoir cet hyver'.

COMMENTARY

[1] this may be a reference to *Les Guèbres*; Voltaire wrote a variety of smaller works that summer.

[2] Jean Pierre Biord.

5. La Harpe to Pierre Michel Hennin

à Paris, ce 15 juillet [1768]

Monsieur,

Je n'ai pas oublié que c'est environ vers ce temps ci que vous devés rendre une visite à notre grande ville de Paris que vous trouverés encore aggrandie. Personne ne compte tirer plus de profit de votre voyage que moi et je me flatte que vous voudrés bien me témoigner ici les mêmes bontés que vous aviés pour moi dans vos états de Genève. Pour commencer je vous prierai de vouloir bien remettre ce petit billet à Mr Marin[1]. C'est pour le faire souvenir qu'il eut la complaisance de me promettre la suite du théâtre françois. Vous m'obligeriés beaucoup si vous vouliés vous charger des volumes qu'il voudra bien vous remettre. Tout est ici dans le plus grand engourdissement. Les spectacles sont cessés depuis quinze jours et ne s'ouvrent que le 22 de ce mois. Rien de nouveau en littérature que ce qu'on attend ou ce qu'on reçoit de Ferney. Vous êtes à la source. J'entretiens toujours un commerce assez exact avec le Seigneur du lieu[2], et j'ai eu lieu d'être satisfait de la manière dont il m'a deffendu[3] contre la canaille littéraire qui voulait absolument que je ne fisse d'autre commerce que de voler des manuscrits et de les vendre, quoiqu'assurément, je ne vendes jamais que les miens, encore assés mal. Mais ce qui m'a fait grand plaisir c'est que tous les principaux gens de lettres et tous les honnêtes gens qui en sont amateurs ont paru savoir autant de gré que moi à Mr de Voltaire de la démarche juste qu'il a faite et des choses

obligeantes qu'il y a mêlées. Le prix de l'Académie sera bientôt décidé. Je ne manquerai pas de vous apprendre si la personne à qui vous vous intéressés a réussi[4]. Le M*e* de Ximenès a composé[5]. Pensés, je vous prie, de me rappeller au souvenir de Mr de Tournes[6] et de Mr Tronchin Cadet[7]. J'ai dîné ici avec le jeune Mr. Tronchin chés le Comte de Creutz[8]. Il a bien de l'esprit.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec autant d'attachement que de respect,

Monsieur, vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

Ma femme vous présente ses civilités.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Institut de France, MS 1265, f.348).

EDITIONS

Perey-Maugras, pp.434-435.

COMMENTARY

[1] Marin was a collaborator in the *Bibliothèque du Théâtre français*; Hennin sent it to Voltaire (Best.13764).

[2] 'La Harpe, dans ce temps-là même, travaillait à une tragédie; il écrivait assez souvent à M. de Voltaire pour le consulter sur cet ouvrage, et celui-ci a toujours répondu avec la plus grande amitié et un ton de franchise et d'intérêt qui exclut toute idée de mépris' (Longchamp and Wagnière, *Mémoires*, i.272). Surprisingly, there remain no letters from La Harpe to Voltaire at this time. A letter published in the unreliable *Correspondance* of Métra (22 September 1778, vii.25-27) would appear to be genuine, as it contains some true details that it would be difficult to invent. All other letters, dating from this time, were probably later destroyed by La Harpe. On 12 February 1781, Panckoucke wrote to La Harpe: 'Il m'a remis des lettres de Voltaire, en échange des siennes qu'il avait grand intérêt à retirer de mes mains' (*Intermédiaire des chercheurs*, lxi.610). This is in answer to two letters from La Harpe which have been published by George B. Watts in the *French review*, xxxii.363, and R. L. Hawkins, *Romanic review*, xxi.130-131.

[3] Best.13953.

[4] La Harpe was unsuccessful with a poem called *Du Philosophe, ou sur les avantages de la philosophie* (Best.14231, 14239).

[5] is this a reference to the *Examen impartial des meilleures tragédies de Racine*?

[6] Jean Jacques de Tournes, a member of the Conseil des 200 in Geneva.

[7] Louis François Tronchin, son of the doctor.

[8] the Swedish ambassador.

6. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

[14 June 1773][a]

Messieurs,

J'ai appris que vous alliés remettre la Tragédie de Varvic. J'y ai fait quelques changemens que je crois avantageux à l'ouvrage. Il y en a dans tous les rôles. Ils ne sont pas considérables, mais ils servent à nourrir l'action et à couper le dialogue. Ils ont été joués en partie à la dernière reprise. Je voudrais bien qu'ils le fussent cette fois dans leur entier, et il ne m'est pas indifférent ni même inutile de voir l'ouvrage sur la scène tel que je l'ai fait et surtout sans aucune mutilation. J'espère, messieurs, que chaque acteur voudra bien se prêter aux efforts que j'ai faits pour améliorer son rôle. Ce n'est pas un grand travail, et ce sera me faire un grand plaisir. Je l'attends d'autant plus de vôtre complaisance, que jusqu'ici j'ai dû me louer infiniment et de l'accueil que vous m'avés fait, et de vos procédés à mon égard.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens dûs aux talens distingués,

messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Messieurs / Messieurs les Comédiens / français / aux Thuilleries

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 is dated in another hand 'Lundi 14 Juin 1773'.

COMMENTARY

Warwick was to have a fresh performance on 1 July 1773. It had been staged previously in July 1769. The main changes given at that time were published in the *Mercure de France* (August 1769), pp.164-174. However, as can be seen by comparing editions, La Harpe continued to make many small changes throughout the play.

7. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Mr le Maréchal de Duras[1] m'a fait l'honneur de m'informer que l'intention de la reine était que Menzicof fût joué à Fontainebleau, et qu'il chargerait Mr de La Ferté[2] d'en informer la Comédie. En conséquence, je dois vous prévenir, messieurs, que j'envoie à Mr de la Porte[3] mon manuscrit et ma distribution afin qu'il transcrive les rôles, et les remette de bonne heure à ceux d'entre vous, messieurs, à qui je crois devoir les confier[4].

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec les sentimens dûs aux talens distingués,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

1er juillet [1775][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] on MS1 the year has been added in another hand.

COMMENTARY

On 22 March 1775, La Harpe read *Menzicoff ou les Exilés* to 'la reine, qui a beaucoup pleuré, et qui a daigné m'accueillir avec une extrême bonté. J'ai lieu d'espérer que cette pièce sera jouée cette année à Fontainebleau sur le théâtre de la cour' (*Corr. litt.* in *Œuvres de La Harpe* (Paris 1820), x.124. This, the best and most complete edition of La Harpe's works, will, from now on, be referred to simply as the *Œuvres*). *Menzicoff* was performed at Fontainebleau on 10 November 1775. The subject, however, displeased the Russian ambassador and the play was not performed in Paris (see letter 24).

[1] premier gentilhomme de la chambre du roi, and as such, administrator of the Comédie française.

[2] Papillon de La Ferté, intendant des menus plaisirs.

[3] secretary of the Comédie française (see following letters).

[4] Le Kain played Menzicoff.

8. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Vôtre Caissier m'a fait dire qu'il lui fallait des ordres de vôtre part pour me payer mon neuvième des deux dernières représentations de Varvic. Vous savés, messieurs, que cette pièce n'étant jamais tombée dans les règles, vous m'avés engagé à signer un arrangement[1] par lequel je vous fais une entière cession de l'ouvrage après qu'il aura eu six représentations dans le cours d'un hyver. Ces représentations n'ont point encore eu lieu, et je saisis cette occasion de vous rappeller vôtre promesse. En attendant, la pièce est toujours à moi, et j'espère que vous voudrés bien donner à vôtre Caissier les ordres nécessaires pour mon payement.

j'ai l'honneur d'être avec l'estime et la reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

lundi 18 7embre 1775

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

Written at the top of MS1 is another hand: 'Répondre à mons[r] de Laharpe que l'on a écrit au Caissier pour qu'il soit satisfait. Et écrire à m[r] De Nesle pour luy faire son compte'. Written at the bottom in yet another hand: 'La Comédie a donné ordre, le d[t] jour, à M. de Néelle, de faire le compte des deux représentations de Warwick'.

COMMENTARY

As a result of this letter, La Harpe received 260 livres 6 sols 8 deniers on 30 September 1775 as his part of the takings of 3980 livres (Comédie française).

[1] it reads: 'Je soussigné cède aux Comédiens français en toute propriété ma tragédie de Varvic, lorsqu'ils en auront donné six représentations avec le droit ordinaire d'auteur dans le courant de l'hiver prochain. Fait à Paris ce 29 juin 1773. Delaharpe'. (holograph, Comédie française. It has been printed in the *Observations pour les Comédiens français sur la pétition adressée par les Auteurs dramatiques*, p.23, and in the *Réponse aux observations pour les Comédiens français*, p.34).

9. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Il y a environ deux ans que par un arrangement entre la Comédie et moi il est convenu qu'on donnerait six représentations de Varvic dans le courant d'un hyver, après lesquelles la pièce appartiendrait à la Comédie. Depuis cet accord elle n'a été jouée que deux fois dans l'été. Ne pouvant de longtemps encore donner un ouvrage nouveau, vous sentés, messieurs, qu'il est intéressant pour moi de reparaître de temps en temps sous les yeux du public, et si vous vouliés bien placer la pièce une ou deux fois avant que l'on commence les représentations de Lorédan[1], vous me rendriés un véritable service que je vous demande avec d'autant plus de confiance que je crois être un des auteurs qui jusqu'ici vous ont le moins occupés de leurs demandes.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec l'estime et la reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

lundi 25 [Décembre 1775][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] the month and year have been added on MS1 by different hands. One hand wrote 1776, but this was corrected by another to 1775.

COMMENTARY

[1] *Loredan* by Fontanelle was not performed in Paris until 17 February 1776.

10. La Harpe to the Premier semainier of the Comédie française

J'ai peine à concevoir, Monsieur, que l'on n'ait pas été instruit plutôt des intentions de Mr Clairfontaine, et que l'on ait perdu un temps précieux depuis la rentrée. Si j'avais été prévenu alors, j'aurais consenti volontiers à prendre la place des *Adieux d'Hector*[1]. Mais aujourd'hui que ma pièce, mise à l'étude, ne peut être jouée qu'à la fin de juin, qui est le plus mauvais temps de l'année, je ne crois pas qu'il soit juste de me faire perdre l'avantage de ma position, qui me met dans le cas de laisser passer trois pièces avant moi, une tragédie et deux comédies, pour être joué moi-même au commencement de l'hyver. La Comédie ne manquera point d'auteurs plus pressés que moi, à qui Mr de Clairfontaine peut céder son rang, ou qui à mon refus peuvent y succéder. J'espère que la Comédie voudra bien avoir égard à mes raisons et ne point s'opposer à mes intérêts qui s'accordent avec les règles qu'elle fait.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement,

Monsieur,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

24 may [1778][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added in another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

Les Barmécides had been on the waiting list of the Comédie française since 26 February 1773 (H. L. Le Kain, *Mémoires*, p.234). The play was first performed on 11 July 1778. In 1776, when there were 47 plays waiting to be staged, La Harpe wrote: 'Il est certainement dur et décourageant, quand on débute dans une carrière aussi difficile que celle du théâtre, d'attendre pendant dix ans le jugement du public, qui peut encourager à la suivre ou prescrire de la quitter' (*Journal de politique et de littérature*, 5 August 1776, ii.459). Things became easier in 1781 (*Corr. litt.*, letters XI, CLXXIV; *Œuvres*, x.99, xii.43).

[1] it does not appear to have been performed.

11. The Premier semainier of the Comédie française to La Harpe

[25 May 1778][a]

M[onsieur],

La Comédie française assemblée a entendu la lecture de la réponse que vous lui avés faite. Elle pourroit avoir l'honneur de vous faire appercevoir que l'instant pour être joué n'est nullement défavorable, que le tems qui pourroit l'être le plus seroit les mois d'Août et de 7bre et qu'encore, elle pourroit citer des séances très suivies dans ce tems; qu'aucun moment n'est mauvais pour les bons ouvrages[b], et qu'à ce titre, la Comédie est dans la confiance que la vôtre ne souffriroit d'aucune saison; elle voit avec peine cette répugnance de Messieurs les Auteurs qui est une des causes principales de l'accumulation des pièces sur son[c] tableau par les longueurs, que ces indéterminations[d] occasionnent. Avant de prendre aucun parti sur votre d[re] réponse, la Comédie, Monsieur, croit vous devoir l'égard de vous prévenir que si vous tenés à votre refus d'être joué actuellement elle sera obligée de se renfermer dans son règlement qui ordonne que la pièce de tout Auteur qui refusera d'être joué, sera mise à la fin de sa colonne. Ce sera[e] avec un véritable chagrin, Monsieur, que la Comédie verroit se reculer le moment de jouer votre pièce, mais elle doit son tems au Public et à Messieurs les Auteurs,

J'ai, &c.

La Comédie attend votre réponse avec la plus grande impatience.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 has at the top of the page in the hand of Delaporte: 'Lettre à M. de la Harpe du Lundi 25 Mai 1778'. [b] crossed out in MS1: 'bonnes pièces'. [c] crossed out on MS1: 'le'. [d] crossed out on MS1: 'des détermin indéterminations'. [e] crossed out and corrected by Delaporte to 'seroit'.

12. *The Premier semainier of the Comédie française to La Harpe*

[27 May 1778][a]

M[onsieur],

La Comédie ne peut offrir à Messieurs les Auteurs que les Acteurs qu'elle a; elle désireroit bien sincèrement, puisque par une nouvelle vuë de distribution, vous voulés donner à un acteur chargé de l'emploi des pères, le rôle que vous déterminiés à M. Le Kain[1], que vous fissiés choix de M. Vanovre[2]; nous connaissons tous son zèle, sa facilité, et ses talens qui pour n'avoir pas encore tout à fait la sanction du Public, n'en sont pas moins traités par lui avec bonté; vôtre rôle serait[b] même un titre de plus que M.[c] Vanovre auroit eu à sa confiance et à son encouragement. [d]Monsieur de Voltaire même vous a donné l'exemple[e] en lui confiant[f] un rôle[3] dans son Irène. Voilà, Monsieur, le moïen le plus simple et le seul que la comédie puisse avoir l'honneur de vous offrir. Je ne cache pas, Monsieur, que son désir le plus ardent seroit que vous vous déterminassiés à envoïer sur le champ vos rôles; elle espère beaucoup de votre pièce et vous trouverés en elle un zèle proportionné à cette confiance. Oui, Monsieur[g], et la Comédie le pense comme vous, les chôses, par mille considérations particulières, n'ont pas toujours été aussi vite qu'elles auroient dû aller, ainsi le soin de se renfermer dans les termes de la loi paraît-il à la Comédie le seul moïen qui lui reste de rétablir l'ordre. Elle est sure que la résolution de vous faire jouer dans ce moment, ne peut que tourner à bien pour l'intérêt de votre ouvrage; voilà les principes et de la sollicitation qu'elle réitère auprès de vous et de la nécessité qu'elle envisageroit de vous porter à la fin de votre colonne, si vous restiés insensible à l'instance qu'elle a l'honneur de vous faire.

La Comédie attend votre réponse avec impatience.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] Delaporte has added at the top of

MS1 'Lettre à M. de la Harpe du 27 Mai 1778'. [b] crossed out on MS1: 'sera'. [c] crossed out on MS1: 'pour lui que'. [d] the next sentence was added at the bottom of MS1. [e] crossed out here in MS1: 'facile à suivre'. [f] it is impossible to read the word crossed out here in MS1. [g] crossed out in MS1: 'les chôses'.

COMMENTARY

The final cast list for *Les Barmécides* is as follows: Amorassan, Molé; Barmécide, Brizard; Semire, mme Vestris; Aaron, Larive; Saëd, Vanhove.

[1] Le Kain died 8 February 1778.

[2] Charles Joseph Vanhove.

[3] Memnon.

13. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Si je m'obstinais dans mes répugnances, je pourrais avoir l'honneur de vous représenter que la loi fondamentale est de faire passer deux comédies après une tragédie, que Mr de Voltaire ne fait exception à la règle qu'en ce qu'il est joué hors de rang, mais que cette distinction ne va pas jusqu'à intervertir l'ordre naturel des représentations, qu'elle ne doit avoir d'autre effet que de reculer d'un rang la tragédie prête à passer, dont l'auteur fait en ce cas un sacrifice ou volontaire ou convenable à l'homme extraordinaire que nous allons perdre. Il se trouve que c'est moi qui ai fait ce sacrifice, car l'auteur des *Adieux* ne voulant pas être joué, je l'aurais été à la place d'Irène. Il résulte que si quelqu'un pouvait *être fondé* à demander que le privilège accordé si justement à Mr de Voltaire ne fît pas perdre le rang à la Tragédie suivante, ce serait moi sans doute, puisque je viens naturellement après lui. Mais dans le cas où je ne réclame point la place qu'Irène m'a fait perdre, il me semble que l'usage constant de jouer deux comédies après une tragédie doit être regardé comme une règle inviolable.

Voilà, messieurs, les objections que je pourrais faire, et qui, je crois, sont fondées. Mais, comme je l'ai déjà dit, l'accord de vos intérêts et des miens sera toujours ma première considération, et ce devrait être toujours la première pour ceux dont les talens ont un rapport si intime, un si grand besoin les uns des autres, et qui marchent sans cesse au même but. La différence des saisons est un

objet de peu d'importance, mais il importe infiniment que la distribution d'un ouvrage soit aussi favorable qu'il est possible à son exécution et à son effet. Ce n'est point par de *nouvelles vues* que je regarde le Calife comme un rôle de Père. Il était, il est vrai, destiné au grand acteur que j'ai perdu, ainsi que vous, messieurs, mais vous savés que son âge lui permettait de jouer le rôle d'un homme dont le fils est déjà en âge de régner, et tel est *Aaron* dans les Barmécides. Mr de Larive doit naturellement succéder aux rôles de son emploi, et je suis fort éloigné de lui contester ni ses droits ni ses talens; sa jeunesse est le seul obstacle dont j'aye été frappé. Si vous ne croyés pas cet obstacle réel, si vous pensés que l'art du costume peut faire de Mr Delarive non pas un vieillard comme *Montaigu*[1], mais un homme d'un âge mûr, si lui même est porté à se charger du rôle, je serai fort aise que dans les circonstances présentes la représentation des Barmécides puisse remplir vos vues, et je ne puis que vous marquer ma reconnaissance des espérances flatteuses que vous en concevés, et qui suffiraient pour me rassurer, si quelque chose rassurait un auteur que l'on va jouer. J'attends vôtre réponse pour envoyer mes rôles.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens d'estime et de reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
Delaharpe

29 may [1778][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added in another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

For further letters from La Harpe at this time, and which refer to his waiting for the first performance of *Les Barmécides*, see Victor Giraud, 'Les Derniers jours et la mort de Voltaire', *RHL*, xlv.360-363.

[1] Old Montagu in Ducis's *Roméo et Juliette*.

14. The Premier semainier of the Comédie française to La Harpe

[10 June 1778][a]

Monsieur,

La Comédie française s'apprêtant à mettre la plus grande célérité dans les répétitions de votre pièce pour en accélerer la Représentation, éprouve un nouveau chagrin, mais un chagrin sincère relativement encore à votre distribution; vous avés donné à M. Monvel le Rôle de Saëd; c'est celui qui a formé la jeunesse d'Amorassan, c'est un Gouverneur de ce prince qui doit être d'un âge respectable. M. Monvel juge que ce Rôle ne peut absolument pas lui aller et qu'il ne ressemble en rien à l'emploi qu'il jouë à la Comédie française. La loi ne contraint les Acteurs à se charger des rôles que dans leur emploi, et la comédie désireroit bien sincèrement que vous voulussiés lever cet obstacle en consentant qu'elle distribue ce Rôle à M. Vanorz[1] dont l'âge, la figure et le Genre du Talent y seront placés. Dans le désir où elle est de ne point perdre de tems, elle indique pour samedi prochain à onze heures une première lecture, rôles à la main, de votre pièce, où elle désire que vous assistiés; elle espère que d'ici là, vous aurés cédé à son désir, qu'au moïen de cela, votre répétition sera complette et que rien ne mettra obstacle à l'empressement qu'elle a de présenter au public un ouvrage, dont elle espère qu'il sera satisfait.

Nous attendons votre réponse avec la plus grande impatience, et j'ai l'honneur d'être bien sincèrement,

Monsieur,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] Delaporte added at the top of MS1 'Lettre à M. de la Harpe du 10 Juin 1778'.

COMMENTARY

Monvel was later said to be annoyed by a review by La Harpe of his *L'Amant Bourru* (*Journal de politique et de littérature*, 5 October 1777, iii.170-174), an a accused of getting his own back with a satirical *Complainte*

des Barmécides, first published in the *Journal de Paris* on 17 July 1778 (pp.789-791). In the *Journal de Paris* of 20 July 1778 (p.802), authorship was claimed by a certain Maurine, and La Harpe himself stated publicly his belief in Monvel's innocence (*Mercure de France*, 5 August 1778, pp.67-69).

[1] or rather, Vanhove.

15. La Harpe to Jean Baptiste Joseph René Dureau de La Malle

7 aoust [1778]

Je vis hier une jolie femme à qui vous écrivés les choses du monde les plus galantes, monsieur le solitaire, et il me semble que la retraite champêtre vous rend fort tendre. Je vous le pardonne à cause de la petite mention que vous voulés bien faire de moi au milieu de vos tendresses, et sérieusement parlant je fus touché jusqu'au fond du cœur, mon cher et aimable ami, de tout l'intérêt que vous m'avés marqué dans mes tribulations. Il y a bien peu d'aussi bons esprits que le vôtre, mais il n'est pas moins vrai qu'il y a peu d'aussi belles âmes, et toutes les belles âmes sont aimantes. Je me félicite de m'être trouvé sur le chemin de la vôtre, et je vous assure que la mienne est faite pour l'entendre et pour lui répondre.

Je voudrais vous envoyer les Barmécides[1] qui paroissent depuis deux jours, et mon édition qui a paru lundi dernier[2]. Mais comment vous adresser ce gros paquet? Indiqués moi comment il faut s'y prendre, et vous le recevrés aussitôt.

Je ne me souviens plus où en étoient les Barmécides, quand vous êtes parti. Ce que je peux vous dire c'est qu'à la neuvième tout était plein, et qu'il est impossible d'être plus applaudi et plus vivement. Les grandes chaleurs sont revenues cette semaine, et à la dixième il y a eu peu de monde. Je[a] retire la pièce demain samedi, après la onzième. Je ne sais pas encore quand elle sera jouée avec les changemens[3], mais il me semble qu'en général ils ont paru heureux. La marche de l'ouvrage est beaucoup plus rapide et plus

intéressante, et la fin du 4ème acte entre Amorissan et Barmécide a moins de discussion et plus d'action et de mouvement. Je crois cette scène et la reconnaissance du 5ème acte d'un grand effet. Vous m'en dirés vôtre avis.

Je ne manque point de courage pour travailler et pour corriger. Mais je vous avouerai avec toute la franchise et l'amitié qui s'épanche que je crains d'en manquer contre la persécution que j'éprouve et dont il n'y eut jamais d'exemple. Je sais que je ne suis pas le premier homme de lettres qui ait eu des ennemis et des tracasseries; mais ce qui m'arrive n'est arrivé à personne. Un parti nombreux et forcéné de rage, composé d'hommes de toute espèce, a formé le projet, non pas de me tourmenter, de m'humilier, de me déchirer, mais de me perdre, s'il est possible, et d'y employer tous les moyens imaginables. Ce projet existe, et n'est pas même caché. Mon grand malheur est d'être marié. Sans cela, il y a longtemps que je me serais dérobé à la fureur de mes ennemis. J'aurais été chez l'étranger jouir de la considération et des avantages qu'on m'y présente[4], et j'aurois quitté ce pays abominable où l'on hait tous les talens, à moins qu'ils ne soient joints à la bassesse, où l'on écrase tout ce qui ne veut pas ramper, où l'on n'encourage rien que la calomnie, où l'on ne vit que de libelles et de scandales, enfin où le plus doux, le plus applaudi de tous les spectacles, c'est celui d'un homme de mérite outragé par des fripons, des méchans et des hypocrites.

Vous vous plaignés de votre retraite. En est-il une qui ne soit préférable au gouffre que j'habite? Vous vivés avec Tacite[5], et je vis au milieu des monstres qu'il a peints. Que ne suis-je avec vous au fond de l'Anjou? mais j'en suis réduit à désirer de vous revoir dans un Paris que j'abhorre, et je compte les charmes de votre amitié parmi les consolations qui me sont les plus nécessaires.

DELAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph, Bibliothèque nationale, n.a.fr.5214, ff.308-309.

EDITIONS

J. Delort, *Mes voyages autour de Paris* (Paris 1821), i.292-295).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] crossed out in MS1: 'écris'.

COMMENTARY

This and the next letter are particularly interesting as they show La Harpe at this time of crisis following his criticism of Voltaire's *Zulime* (*Mercure de France*, 5 July 1778, p.68). The multitude of attacks on La Harpe was to lead to his losing the editorship of the *Mercure de France* in November 1778. Another letter to Dureau de La Malle has been published by Delort, i.170-173 and Alexandre Jovicevich, *Correspondance de J. F. de La Harpe* (Paris 1965), pp.29-33.

[1] Paris, Pissot, 1778 in-8vo (21 cm.), pp.xvi.75p.

[2] *Œuvres de M. de La Harpe, de l'Académie française, nouvellement recueillies*, Paris, Pissot, 6 vol. in-8°.

[3] see La Harpe in the *Mercure de France*, 25 July 1778, pp.310-311. For a description of the play as it was first performed, see *Journal encyclopédique*, September 1778, vi.309-319.

[4] see *Correspondance de Métra* (Londres 1787-1793), 23 January 1779, vii.244: 'On dit que l'Impératrice de Russie n'a pas témoigné assez d'envie de voir notre petit *La Harpe* pour le déterminer à affliger la France de sa perte'.

[5] La Harpe will review his translation of Tacitus when it appears in 1790 (see *Mercure de France*, May 1790, pp.93-105).

16. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

J'ai l'honneur d'envoyer à la Comédie des exemplaires de la tragédie des Barmécides imprimés avec les changemens que j'ai cru devoir y faire. C'est une faible marque de la reconnaissance que je vous dois, Messieurs, pour le zèle que vous m'avés témoigné dans une saison si défavorable, et dans des circonstances qui ne l'étaient pas moins[1]. Vous avés pu voir dans le dernier mercure[2] l'expression des sentimens que je croyais devoir à chacun des acteurs qui ont joué dans mon ouvrage; et je ne rappelle le témoignage que pour l'opposer à une nouvelle méchanceté de mes ennemis. Ils ont imaginé qu'un des meilleurs moyens de nuire à l'auteur des Barmécides, était de lui supposer des torts envers les personnes qui étaient le mieux disposées pour lui, et en particulier envers la comédie. En conséquence, ils n'ont pas manqué de m'attribuer, non pas dans un journal français (on ne l'aurait pas

souffert), mais dans une gazette étrangère[3], le propos le plus plat et le plus grossier contre les comédiens. Ce n'est pas que j'aye craint que cette calomnie suffisamment refutée par la manière dont je me suis exprimé plus d'une fois sur la Comédie française, pût faire quelque impression sur vous; mais j'ai voulu vous faire remarquer, messieurs, que j'ai affaire à des ennemis qui ne négligent rien.

J'ose dire que si jamais je n'ai eu à me plaindre de la Comédie; je suis peut-être aussi de tous les auteurs celui dont elle a eu le plus à se louer. Je n'ai jamais entré[4] dans aucune des querelles qu'on lui a suscitées, ni souscrit de mon nom aucune des accusations intentées contre elle[5]. J'ai toujours regardé comme le plus grand obstacle aux progrès d'un art qui touche à sa décadence, et qui peut-être a fini avec M. de Voltaire, cette division trop commune et trop funeste des auteurs et des Comédiens; et j'ai constamment pensé qu'il devait y avoir une union naturelle et nécessaire entre nous qui cultivons l'art dramatique et ceux dont les talens ont pour objet de faire valoir les nôtres.

Il est naturel que je désire impatiemment de voir sur la scène l'effet des changemens que j'ai faits à ma tragédie. Il me semble que l'on pourrait copier de nouveau les rôles et les remettre aux acteurs pour les étudier à loisir, afin de placer la pièce, lorsque la Comédie en trouvera le moment. Il est juste qu'après avoir essuyé tous les désavantages d'une mauvaise saison, je sois placé dans un temps plus favorable; et il est de la plus grande importance pour moi, que mon ouvrage soit au Théâtre avec le moins de défauts qu'il m'a été possible. Je remets mes intérêts, Messieurs, à vôtre justice et à vôtre Bienveillance.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

Vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

10 août 1778

MANUSCRIPTS

Original (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

Delaporte has written at the top of MS1: 'répondre que l'on faira copier les rôles'.

COMMENTARY

[1] the takings at the door were: 11 July, 2616 livres; 13 July, 1304; 15 July, 880; 18 July, 1321; 20 July, 1078; 22 July, 1323; 25 July, 1441; 29 July, 1173; 1 August, 1269; 5 August, 768; 8 August, 854; La Harpe was paid 965 livres 19 sols 7 deniers on 27 August 1778 (Comédie française). It was suggested at the time that the deficit in the takings was made good by Shuvalof (*Mémoires de Bachaumont*, 18 July 1778, xii.49). Having failed to obtain twelve performances at its opening, the play was not entitled to a fresh run, and, in spite of this letter, was never performed again.

[2] *Mercure de France*, 5 August 1778, pp.67-69.

[3] a whole series of attacks on La Harpe appeared at this time in the *Courrier de l'Europe*. Unwisely, La Harpe finally wrote a letter of complaint which only served to unleash further attacks (*Courrier de l'Europe*, 27 October 1778, iv.268-269).

[4] '*Entrer, partir, repartir, rester, sortir, tomber* ont pu autrefois prendre *avoir* ou *être*, suivant que l'on voulait marquer l'action ou l'état' (M. Grevisse, *Le Bon Usage*, p.572).

[5] from a letter from La Harpe to Beaumarchais that passed at the Andrieux sale of 21 November 1932 (*RHL*.xl.464) it would appear that La Harpe, although anxious to support Beaumarchais, refused his invitation to dinner of 27 June 1777, and only agreed to turn up afterwards. He was extremely wary of being associated with some of the others present: 'Vous connaissez trop de monde pour m'aboucher avec mes ennemis déclarés'. It would seem certain, on the other hand, that he turned up at the meeting on 3 July 1777, and by the Revolution, he would, of course, be one of the Association's most active members.

17. La Harpe to Pierre Louis Ginguené

[September 1778?][a]

Monsieur,

C'est avec grand plaisir que j'imprime vôtre lettre qui d'un bout à l'autre me paraît la raison même. Mais comme cette querelle de musique m'a déjà attiré des tracasseries et que je suis intimement lié avec ceux dont vous attaqués l'opinion, je vous prie, monsieur, pour l'acquit de ma conscience de mettre vôtre nom au bas de vôtre lettre. Je n'y vois point d'inconvénient, et cela même ne peut vous faire que beaucoup d'honneur. J'attends vôtre aveu sur cet

article. Vôtre lettre au surplus ne peut être que dans le N° du 5 8bre. Le journal prochain est imprimé.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec la considération la plus distinguée,
Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
Delaharpe

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Ginguéné, / à Paris

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Académie française, Collection Moulin).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] this is difficult to date as no signed letter from Ginguéné on the music quarrel was published in either the *Journal de politique et de littérature* or the *Mercure de France* during the period of La Harpe's editorship. The *Mercure de France* of 5 October 1778 (pp.56-69) does contain an anonymous defence of Gluck under the title of *Réponse à la lettre de M. Marmontel insérée dans le Mercure du 5 Septembre*. However, Ginguéné was, like Marmontel and La Harpe, an ardent supporter of Piccini (see his *Sonnet à M. Piccini sur son Opéra de Roland* in the *Journal de politique et de littérature*, 5 June 1778, ii.177). The desire for an end to the quarrel, which La Harpe expresses here, is indicative of his feelings in the autumn of 1778. In 1777, he was still writing stormy articles on the subject himself, and at that time did not seem to care what his former friends thought. On the other hand, he would appear to have already broken off relations with Arnaud and Suard by March 1778, when he wrote: 'Il a fallu toute l'intolérance de leur despotisme pour me forcer à m'éloigner d'eux, après avoir vécu long-temps dans leur société que j'aimais'. (*Corr. litt.*, letter LXXIII; *Œuvres*, x.482).

18. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser trente exemplaires des *Muses Rivales*[1], pour être distribués à toute la Comédie.

Après la manière dont cette pièce a été mise au Théâtre et accueillie du public, tout ce qui me reste à désirer, c'est que vous vouliés bien suivre le plan si justement établi, d'abord, de faire précéder cet ouvrage par tous ceux qui ont consacré la mémoire de M. de Voltaire. Il me sera doux, je l'avoue, et en même tems

très agréable au public, de compter les représentations des *Muses Rivales* par les chefs d'œuvre du Grand homme à qui j'en ai offert l'hommage. Il est très important, ce me semble, de prévenir autant qu'il sera possible, les variations et les contretems qui pourraient déranger ce plan auquel j'attache le plus grand intérêt, ainsi que toute la famille de M. de Voltaire. C'est après Oedipe, Brutus, Alzire, Mérope, Mahomet, Sémiramis, l'Orphelin de la Chine, Rome Sauvée &c. que les *Muses Rivales* peuvent paraître de quelque prix au moins par la vérité et la justice, et l'effet de cette bagatelle dépend surtout de l'impression que l'on a éprouvée auparavant. Je ne doute pas, Messieurs, qu'attachés autant que moi à la gloire de M. de Voltaire, dont vous avez été si souvent les instrumens, en même tems que les organes de son génie, vous n'entriez dans mes raisons et dans mes vues, et que vos sentimens ne répondent aux miens.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec toute l'estime et toute la reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

Messieurs,

Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

à Paris ce 25 fév. 1779.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] Paris, Pissot 1779 in-8vo, pp.31. It is announced as printed on the same day in the *Journal de Paris*, p.221.

19. The Premier semainier of the Comédie française to La Harpe

[1779?][a]

Monsieur,

[b]La Comédie accepteroit volontiers l'offre que vous lui faites au sujet des Muses Rivales, si cette offre ne paroissait partir de l'opinion où vous êtes que notre intention est de donner tous les

ans dans la dernière semaine de may, trois représentations de cette pièce et d'en faire un hommage annuel à la mémoire de M. De Voltaire;[c] La Comédie pleine du même zèle et avec la résolution de la réaliser[d] aussi souvent qu'elle le pourra, ne peut pourtant pas prendre l'Engagement d'où paraît partir votre offre; en conséquence, elle vous prie de garder vos droits sur les Muses Rivales, elle s'apprête à les jouer et saisit avec plaisir cette occasion de vous donner[e] une preuve de son sincère attachement.

J'ai.

Lettre à faire copier et signer par le semainier pr. M. De Laharpe.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] this letter is difficult to date. La Harpe gave the play to Argental in September 1778 ('Epître dédicatoire à Mme. Denis', *Œuvres*, ii.203-204), and it was he who presented the play anonymously to the Comédie française (see letter 21). When the play was performed in 1779, La Harpe's identity was, however, soon revealed (*Journal de Paris*, 10 February 1779, p.163). The play was not performed again until 10 July 1791 at the Théâtre de la rue de Richelieu, but in June 1782 La Harpe wrote that there was a chance of a fresh run then (*Corr. litt.*, letter CLXVII ; *Œuvres*, xi.496). [b] crossed out on MS1: 'La Comédie croit facilement que vous vous êtes trouvé récompensé du soin et du travail des Muses Rivales par son succès et encore plus par le sentiment qui vous l'avoit fait faire; elle en consentiroit le partage avec vous, elle accepteroit bien volontiers l'offre que vous lui faites, si elle &c.' [c] crossed out on MS1: 'Mais'. [d] crossed out on MS1: 'tout'. [e] it is impossible to read what has been crossed out here on MS1.

20. La Harpe to m. Bellot, cashier of the Comédie française

M. de la Harpe souhaite le bon jour à Monsieur Bellot, et le prie de vouloir bien lui faire savoir quand il pourra lui donner le Décompte des représentations des Muses Rivales[1] et de la dernière de Warwick[2]. M. de la Harpe se propose d'aller passer

quelque tems à la Campagne, après les fêtes de Pasques et il désirerait que ce compte fut achevé auparavant.

ce 21 Mars 1779

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

At the bottom of MS I there is written: 'Mémoire de M. De la Porte pr Copie de pièces et de rôles des Muses Rivales 14^{ll}'. The Archives also contain the following note: 'Mémoire du Sr. Delaporte, secrétaire de la Comédie française, pour les Muses rivales, comédie de Monsieur de La Harpe.

Pour copie de la Pièce et des Rôles 14^{ll}

Reçu de Monsieur Bellot, pour le compte de Monsieur de La Harpe, la somme de quatorze livres, contenue au Mémoire ci-dessus.

à Paris, ce 30 mars 1779.

Delaporte.'

COMMENTARY

[1] the takings were as followings: 1 February, 2339 livres; 5 February, 2680 livres 10 sols; 8 February, 2733 livres 10 sols; 10 February, 2502 livres 10 sols; 13 February, 2456 livres 10 sols; 15 February, 2510 livres 10 sols; 19 February, 2421 livres; 22 February, 2813 livres 10 sols; 27 February, 2471 livres 10 sols; 1 March, 2715 livres 10 sols; 6 March, 2719 livres 10 sols; 8 March, 1995 livres 10 sols; 10 March, 2324 livres 15 sols; 13 March, 2667 livres 10 sols; 15 March, 1647 livres; 17 March, 2339 livres 10 sols; 20 March, 2743 livres 10 sols. However, La Harpe will have 279 livres held back (see next letter), and to begin with will only be paid 1677 livres 4 sols 7 deniers (Comédie française).

[2] performed in Paris on 13 January 1779 and at Court on 14 January. The takings on 13 January came to 1210 livres, and La Harpe received 90 livres 14 sols 5 deniers (Comédie française).

21. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

fondé sur ce principe incontestable qu'il n'y a point de loi pour celui qui l'ignore et qui n'a pû en être instruit, permettés que malgré ma répugnance pour toute les discussions d'intérêt, je vous adresse mes représentations sur une perte que j'éprouve dans la rétribution des Muses Rivales.

J'ai toujours cru jusqu'ici que pour quelque pièce que ce fût, l'auteur avoit le droit de donner six places à l'amphithéâtre. Je le

croyais d'autant plus qu'autrefois nous avions encore six places aux troisièmes, qui ont été supprimées, et que rien n'a remplacées, raison de plus pour penser qu'on n'aurait pas voulu faire une diminution nouvelle dans les droits des auteurs. Si cette opinion était une erreur, M^de^ Vestris elle même, qui m'autorise à citer son témoignage, a servi à m'y confirmer. Lorsque je gardais encore l'anonyme, Mr d'Argental, chargé de représenter l'auteur, demanda à M^de^ Vestris quels étaient ses droits pour les billets, elle lui répondit que c'étaient les droits ordinaires des auteurs, *six places à l'amphithéâtre*. Il les donna pendant trois représentations. Je les donnai pour les suivantes et n'excédai point ce nombre. Cependant, lorsque j'ai compté avec le caissier de la comédie, il m'a rabattu 280^ll^ pour l'excédant des billets d'amphithéâtre[1], et voyant ma surprise, il m'a montré un règlement de 1776 qui borne à deux places les droits d'auteur pour les pièces en un acte. Je n'examine point si c'est là le cas de mettre une différence entre les pièces de 5 et de 3 actes et celles d'un seul. Je me borne à vous représenter, messieurs, que n'étant point dans l'usage de communiquer vos règlemens aux auteurs, j'ai ignoré et dû ignorer celui-ci, et je vous laisse absolument les maîtres de décider s'il est juste que je perde 280^ll^ pour n'avoir pas été instruit d'un règlement que je n'ai pas pû connaître, et dont une personne même de la Comédie n'était pas plus instruite que moi. Quelque soit vôtre jugement, Messieurs, dont je n'appellerai point, je dois vous observer que pour prévenir de pareils inconvéniens, il serait à propos chaque fois qu'un auteur donne une pièce, que le Contrôleur de la Comédie lui remît un exposé de ses droits, car il est juste au moins que ceux qui font les loix, les fassent connaître à ceux qui y sont soumis.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec toute l'estime et la reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

mercredi 7 avril 1779

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] in fact, he had 279 livres held back. The number of tickets given is as follows: 1 February, 4; 5 February, 4; 8 February, 4; 10 February, 4; 13 February, 6; 15 February, 0; 19 February, 9; 22 February, 14; 27 February, 0; 1 March, 6; 6 March, 6; 8 March, 6; 10 March, 6; 13 March, 10; 15 March, 2; 17 March, 6; 20 March, 6. (Comédie française). Thus, of the 93 tickets distributed, 63 were in excess. The original sum to be withheld came to 291 livres, but 12 livres were deducted on account of the two performances where he had not distributed any tickets. La Harpe's letter was to have the desired effect. The Archives contain the following note:

'Monsieur Bellot payera à Monsieur Delaharpe la somme de deux cent soixante sept livres sept sols six deniers pour le remplire des Billets d'amphithéâtre qu'il avoit donné excédant le règlement et dont la Comédie lui en fait remise (pour la pièce des *Muses Rivales*.

à Paris ce 12 avril 1779.Desplans.
pour acquit. Delaharpe.
Enregistré ce 14 avril 1779
N° 1 Desplans'.

22. *La Harpe to the Premier semainier of the Comédie française*

à Versailles, 21 May [1780][a]

Je désirerai toujours, Monsieur, que mes arrangemens puissent s'accorder avec ceux de la Comédie. Mais il m'est impossible de me passer de M. Brizard. D'ailleurs, il y a deux Tragédies reçues avant la mienne[1], et l'auteur de *Thamas Koulikan* m'écrit qu'il ne demande pas mieux que d'être joué actuellement[2]. Si cela peut convenir à la Comédie, j'y consens de tout mon cœur.

Par la même occasion, Monsieur, je vous prierai de demander pour moi la lecture d'une Tragédie de Philoctète que j'ai traduite de Sophocle[3]. Vous m'obligerés de vouloir bien me faire savoir dans quel temps je puis l'obtenir, parce qu'étant fort peu à Paris dans cette saison, je prendrai mes mesures en conséquence.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, Delaharpe

Mon adresse est *chés Mr le Hoc*[4], *premier commis dans les bureaux de la marine.*

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] the year 1783 with a question mark has been added to the date on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] in spite of the withdrawal of *Menzicoff* in 1775, he continued to try and get it staged.

[2] *Nadir ou Thamas Koulikan* by Paul Ulric Du Buisson was first performed on 31 August 1780.

[3] he read the first two acts of the play at the Académie française on 25 August 1780, but at that time claimed not to wish its being performed: 'comme l'assemblée de l'académie et le parterre d'aujourd'hui sont deux choses fort différentes, je suis un peu éloigné de penser à donner cette pièce au théâtre dans un moment où la corruption du goût est si générale et si honteuse, et où cette belle simplicité antique et cette éloquence vraie et touchante des tragédies grecques, pourraient fort bien n'être pas goûtées'. He will prefer to wait for the opening of the new theatre with its seated audience (*Corr. litt.*, letter CXXXIII; *Œuvres*, xi.305).

[4] Louis Grégoire Lehoc.

23. La Harpe to Jacques Joseph Marie Decroix

à Paris, ce 20 août 1780

J'espère, Monsieur, que vous voudrés bien excuser le retard involontaire de ma réponse. J'ai été six semaines à la campagne et mes lettres m'attendaient à Paris; je n'ai trouvé la vôtre qu'à mon retour. J'ai reçu avec reconnaissance les marques de vôtre souvenir et l'ouvrage que vous avés bien voulu m'envoyer. Je ne puis que vous féliciter de l'hommage que vous avés rendu à la mémoire du grand homme que nous aimions tous deux. Vous étiés bien fait, Monsieur, pour sentir tout ce qu'il vallait et tous ceux qui comme nous aiment les lettres et l'humanité, doivent longtems déplorer sa perte.

N'ayant point l'honneur d'avoir aucune relation directe avec l'Impératrice de Russie, je n'ai pu me charger de vôtre commission, mais j'ai fait parvenir vôtre ouvrage au Grand Duc son fils qui sans doute le lira avec plaisir, et j'ai prié M. le Comte de

Schouwalof, de se charger des autres exemplaires pour la Cour de Pétersbourg. Je vous prie, Monsieur, d'être bien persuadé de l'empressement que j'aurai toujours à faire ce qui pourra vous être agréable, et du sincère et respectueux attachement avec lequel je suis,

Monsieur,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Decroix, secrétaire / du Roi, rue Princesse, / à Lille

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Académie française, Collection Moulin). — It passed at the Etienne Charavay sale of 12 March 1855, p.13, no.136.

COMMENTARY

This letter raises several problems. Although the work discussed, Decroix's *La Mort de Voltaire*, appeared in the summer of 1780, the rest of the letter would suggest that it was written in 1781. It is possible to follow La Harpe's movements at this time fairly closely in his *Correspondance littéraire* and from the *Registre des présences à l'Académie française depuis l'année 1757* (Académie française). La Harpe was regular in his attendances at the Academy's thrice weekly meetings and usually only missed them for a valid reason. In 1780 he only missed three meetings in July and two in August. He would appear to have out of Paris in May (see letter 22) and June, but only to have gone to Sannois and other places within easy reach of the capital. In 1781, on the other hand, he accompanied Shuvalov to Montbéliard where they stayed for the whole of July (*Corr. litt.*, letters CLI, CLII, *Œuvres*, xi.401-402, 406-407). Shuvalov was on his way back to Russia, and it is then that he probably took with him copies of Decroix's poem. La Harpe last attended a meeting at the Academy on 23 June, and was not seen there again until 9 August. Nevertheless see the letter to Decroix on 20 September 1780 in which La Harpe discusses the harsh treatment of Decroix's poem in the *Mercure de France*, 9 August 1780, pp.121-124, and again says that he has been out of touch with Parisian life (Alexandre Jovicevich, *Correspondance de J. F. de La Harpe*, pp.37-38).

24. *La Harpe to J. B. Colbert de Beaulieu,* called *Bellemont*

Des circonstances qui me sont personnelles, Monsieur, ne me permettant point de laisser jouer *Menzicof*, la Comédie est bien la maîtresse de procéder à la représentation d'un autre ouvrage, et de ne tenir aucun compte du mien.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement,
Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

mercredi 13 7embre 1780

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Bellemont, / semainier de la / Comédie française

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

It is not clear why La Harpe should now withdraw *Menzicoff*, or rather, why it should still be on the waiting list of the Comédie française when it was seen to displease the Russian ambassador in 1775 (*Correspondance de Métra*, 25 November, 9 December 1775, ii.250-251, 265, and *Corr. litt.*, letter XIV; *Œuvres*, x.117). Although in theory (Rules of 1781, article VIII, 17), an author was only supposed to give up his turn once, La Harpe will continue to abandon his position with *Menzicoff* on at least two further occasions in 1787 and 1788 (see letters 64, 65). Did he rely on this play for an opening on the waiting list for new works? In any case, *Menzicoff* was never performed in Paris.

25. *La Harpe to madame Susanne Curchod de Nasse Necker*

Madame,

J'ai lû avec admiration l'ouvrage[1] unique en son genre que Monsieur Necker a eu la bonté de me faire parvenir. J'ai lû avec attendrissement le morceau qui le termine et qui vous concerne.

Il fait sentir ce que vous êtes l'un pour l'autre, Monsieur Necker et vous, Madame, et comme il n'y avait que lui qui pût se charger de vôtre éloge, il n'y avait aussi que vous à qui il appartient de se charger de son bonheur et de sa récompense. Il y a longtemps que je crois, et j'ai même osé écrire que les mystères affectés de l'administration que l'on prétendait si nécessaires et si inaccessibles, n'étaient que le voile de la faiblesse et de l'impéritie, et le plus souvent encore, les ténèbres des coupables[2]. Ce que des gens de lettres ont pensé, un homme d'Etat le prouve. Sa conduite est sans exemple, comme son ouvrage est sans modèle. C'est la première fois qu'un ministre a tenu cette conduite devant une nation, mais aussi c'est la première fois qu'on a pû parler ainsi de soi-même. On sent en lisant Monsieur Necker qu'il n'y a point de langage plus naturellement écrit que celui de la conscience d'un homme de bien, et s'il a reparé les fautes de ceux qui l'ont précédé, il impose un grand fardeau à ceux qui le suivront.

Daignés agréer, Madame, pour Monsieur Necker, et pour vous mes félicitations et mes remerciemens, et les témoignages de ma profonde vénération.

DELAHARPE

21 février [1781]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Bodleian Library, Oxford MS 25438, f.207 (Montaigu d.20).

COMMENTARY

[1] *Compte Rendu, présenté au roi au mois de Janvier 1781.* (*Corr. litt.*, letter CXLIII; *Œuvres*, xi.364-366).

[2] as a disciple of Voltaire La Harpe often advocated administrative reform (*Eloge de Charles* V and *Des malheurs de la guerre &c.*, *Œuvres*, iv.23-28, v.19). As did many, he celebrated the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI as announcing the desired changes (*Discours de réception; Œuvres*, v.87-88). Throughout his life, La Harpe would remain an admirer of Necker (*Mercure de France*, 27 February 1790, pp.132-144; 6 March 1790, pp.15-32; *Lycée*, xv.279). When he read his *Eloge de Voltaire* at the Académie française in January 1780, La Harpe was widely applauded for saying of Necker:

'C'est la première fois qu'on a vu l'administration, portant de tout côté la lumière et la réforme, exécuter au milieu de la guerre tout le bien qu'on n'aurait pas osé espérer même dans la paix' (*Œuvres*, iv.377).

26. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Quand j'ai imprimé la Tragédie de Philoctète traduite de Sophocle[1], il ne me convenait pas, en essayant le goût du public sur ce genre de nouveauté, d'avoir aucune opinion décidée sur l'effet qu'elle pourrait produire au théâtre. Je me suis contenté de motiver mon admiration pour un chef d'œuvre consacré par les suffrages de tant de siècles, et d'observer en même temps les différences qui peuvent se trouver entre le système dramatique des Grecs et le nôtre[2]. L'accueil général que l'on a fait à cette traduction du plus bel ouvrage de Sophocle m'a fait penser que l'on pouvait en risquer la représentation, et les circonstances particulières où se trouve la Comédie française ont paru m'en offrir l'occasion la plus favorable. L'absence de Melle S^t^Val suspend toute nouveauté tragique. Depuis la rentrée on attend Melle Thénard pour jouer une pièce de M. Durosoy[3]. Dans cet intervalle, ne serait-il pas avantageux à la Comédie de pouvoir mettre un ouvrage connu, où il n'y a que trois personnages, point de rôle de femme, et que l'on peut jouer d'ici à quinze jours? Il n'y aurait aucun obstacle, puisqu'aucune tragédie ne se trouve dans le même cas, et que d'ailleurs en plaçant Philoctète au tour de Menzicoff, il doit passer avant M. Durosoy. Il me semble, messieurs, que toutes les circonstances se réunissent pour vous faire agréer cette proposition. J'ai compté, en vous la faisant, sur la bonne volonté que vous m'avés toujours témoignée, et dont différens obstacles m'ont souvent empêché de profiter. Je ne crois pas qu'il s'en présente ici, et je crois de plus que la Comédie peut se faire un plaisir et un honneur de marquer quelque empressement à établir sur la scène un des plus beaux monumens de l'antiquité.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens d'estime et de reconnaissance que je dois à vos talens,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

18 may 1781.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

Philoctète was not performed until 16 June 1783 (see letter 22, n.3).

[1] Paris, Lambert & Baudouin, 1781, in-8vo, p.88. It is announced as printed in the *Journal de Paris*, 8 February 1781, p.155.

[2] see the preface to the play and the *Lycée*, i.422-477.

[3] *Richard III* was performed on 6 July 1781.

27. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

[12 June 1781]

Monsieur,

La Comédie entendra, demain à 11 h[rs], si cela vous convient, la lecture de votre Tragédie de Philoctète. Vous aurez, s'il vous plaît, la complaisance de choisir dans la liste ci-après les deux personnes que vous avez droit de nommer pour se trouver à cette Lecture. Tous les autres acteurs s'y trouveront, excepté ceux qui sont malades ou absens.

M[rs] Fleury	M[lle] La Chassaigne
Courville	
Dorival	

Je vous prie, Monsieur, d'avoir la complaisance de m'instruire de vos intentions, dans le jour, afin que l'on puisse avertir tout le monde.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, avec la plus respectueuse considération,

Monsieur,

votre très hum[ble &c.]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Comédie française).

28. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

M. Delaharpe sera prêt demain à onze heures pour la lecture de Philoctète. Comme il suppose que M. Delarive doit y assister de droit, ayant un rôle[1] dans la pièce, il choisit Mrs Fleury et Dorival parmi ceux qu'on a nommés, mais si cet arrangement ne peut avoir lieu, il choisit Mrs Delarive et Fleury.

mardi 12 juin 1781

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur De la / Porte, secrétaire / de la Comédie &c. /

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY
[1] Philoctète.

29. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

Lettre à M. de La Harpe

M[onsieur],

Votre trag[édie] de Philoctète est la première de celles qui doivent être jouées; la Comédie croit devoir s'y préparer d'avance, et vous prie, M[onsieur], d'en faire faire les rôles et de les lui envoyer avec leur distribution, afin qu'il n'y ait point de délai pour la représ[entation] d'une Pièce aussi intéressante.
J'ai l'honneur., &c.

Ce 12 août 1781

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph draft (Comédie française).

30. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

M. de La Porte m'a fait demander de vôtre part la distribution et les rôles de Philoctète. J'avois déjà réglé l'une, et les autres seront bientôt prêts. Mais d'abord je suppose que suivant la coutume, on doit faire passer avant Philoctète une comédie en 5 actes ou en trois, et de plus, je dois vous observer, Messieurs, que si m. Molé s'obstine à refuser le rôle de Pyrrhus[1], la représentation de Philoctète devient impossible. Je vous prie, messieurs, d'être bien persuadés que c'est d'autant moins mauvaise volonté de ma part, qu'au contraire je ne saurais trop vous témoigner combien je suis reconnaissant de l'accueil que vous avés fait à l'ouvrage et à l'auteur. Je voudrais de tout mon cœur répondre aux honnêtetés dont vous m'avés comblé, mais vous n'ignorés pas que je ne suis pas sûr de trouver partout la même bienveillance, et que plus mes faibles talens sont exposés à la critique, plus ils ont besoin d'être soutenus de ceux des acteurs principaux et les mieux vûs du public. Vous entrerés sans doute dans ces considérations, messieurs, et vous sentirés que ce n'est pas ma faute, si M. Molé rejette un rôle de 500 vers, noble, intéressant, agréable à jouer, qui, sans être d'un aussi grand effet que Philoctète, n'en est pas moins réellement un rôle de premier emploi. J'avoue que je ne saurais comprendre comment M. Molé qui a si souvent fait preuve de zèle pour les auteurs, et pour moi en particulier, persisterait gratuitement dans un refus, dont la Comédie et l'auteur de Philoctète auraient également droit de se plaindre.

Au reste, Messieurs, je ne puis mieux vous marquer ma bonne volonté, (dans le cas où Philoctète ne pourrait pas avoir lieu), qu'en vous offrant à la place une autre Tragédie dont la distribution serait peutêtre susceptible de moins de difficultés[2]. Je serai prêt à la lire, le jour que la comédie voudra choisir, et je m'estimerai très heureux que la nature des rôles pût mettre tout le monde d'accord.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens d'estime et de reconnaissance que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

lundi 13 aoust 1781

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] see letter 51.

[2] *Les Brames*; see letter 33. La Harpe had practically finished the play in December 1774 (Best.18121).

31. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

M. Delaharpe a l'honneur de faire ses complimens à Monsieur Delaporte; il avait déjà marqué à Mde. Vestris qu'il choisissait M. Courville, et il sera prêt vendredi à onze heures.

mercredi[a] 15 aoust [1781]

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Delaporte, / secrétaire de la / Comédie française, / &c. /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] La Harpe started to write 'mardi'.

32. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

à MM. de la Harpe et le Fèvre[1]

Monsieur,

La Comédie française me charge d'avoir l'honneur[a] de vous dire de sa part que M. Brizard étant chargé de deux rôles très

longs[b] pour le service de la Cour, elle désirerait savoir si vous avez besoin de lui dans votre tragédie des Brames qui est la première de celles du Tableau.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très sincèrement,
M[onsieur], v[otre &c.]

Ce 24 7bre 1781

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] crossed out on MS1: 'si vous demander si vous avez besoin de M. Bri'.
[b] crossed out on MS1: 'considérables'.

COMMENTARY

[1] Lefèvre's *Elisabeth de France* was first performed by a troupe of actors at the house of the duc d'Orléans on 22 April 1783.

33. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

Vous avés entendu les Brames, Monsieur, et vous savés que M. Brizard y est chargé d'un rôle de la plus grande importance. Il m'est donc impossible de m'en passer. Il est triste que l'étude d'une pièce qui passe avant son tour empêche M. Brizard d'étudier celle qui est en droit de *passer*. Cela est contre toute justice. Mais n'y aurait-il pas moyen que M. Brizard se mît sur le champ à *Obarez*, puisque les pièces pour la cour sont encore éloignées? Au surplus, j'ai une autre Tragédie[1] prête, où M. Brizard a un rôle[2] beaucoup moins long qu'*Obarez*, et très intéressant, très favorable à l'acteur, et qui semble fait pour lui. Si la Comédie veut me donner un des jours de la semaine prochaine, je lirai cet ouvrage, qui pourrait passer tout de suite, si on en était content. C'est surquoi je vous prie, Monsieur, de vouloir bien me faire réponse.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement, Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

24 septembre [1781][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added by another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] *Jeanne de Naples*.

[2] Montescale.

34. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

à M. de la Harpe, 26 7bre 1781

Monsieur,

La Comédie est très flattée de la proposition que vous lui faites; elle a besoin de donner des nouveautés, et votre ouvrage ne peut qu'être[a] agréable au Public. Elle vous prie encore d'en faire la lecture demain matin, et de choisir[b] les deux personnes[c] que vous avez droit de nommer. L'assemblée attend votre réponse.

J'ai l'h[onneur &c.]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] crossed out in MS1: 'doit être'.
[b] crossed out in MS1: 'nommer'.
[c] crossed out in MS1: 'doivent s'y trouver'.

35. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

26 7bre. 1781

Je ne demanderais pas mieux, Monsieur, que de lire demain, et je suis très flatté de l'empressement de la Comédie, mais la pièce n'est pas au net, et il me serait impossible de m'y reconnaître. Je serai prêt pour mardi prochain. On peut y compter.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement, Monsieur,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Delaporte

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

36. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

30 7bre 1781

Je croyais que M. Delarive et Madame Vestris étaient du Comité, Monsieur, et ce sont eux que je choisis, puisqu'ils n'en sont pas. Je serai prêt mardi à onze heures.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement, Monsieur,
votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur De la Porte

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

37. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

[24 November 1781]

Messieurs,

Je crois devoir vous rendre compte des motifs qui me décident à retirer le rôle de Tarente des mains de M. Grandmon[1]. Ce rôle est de la plus grande importance. Les scènes capitales de la pièce dépendent de celui qui le joue. Un mot changé ou omis en détruit l'effet. On ne peut donc être trop assuré et de la mémoire et de la bonne volonté de celui qui en est chargé, et certes M. Grandmon n'a montré ni l'une ni l'autre. Il ne savait pas un mot de son rôle à la répétition de ce matin; à la répétition d'une pièce qu'on devait jouer le surlendemain. Il n'était prêt sur aucun des mouvemens les plus essentiels à la scène, il ne paraissait pas en avoir la première idée, et lorsque ses camarades le lui ont reproché, il a répondu tout haut qu'il *n'était pas pressé d'apprendre un mauvais rôle.* Il l'a bien fait voir en effet; car au lieu d'étudier ce rôle qu'il promettait de

savoir pour lundi, il est allé jouer Zamore à St Germain. Jugés, messieurs, si une telle conduite et un tel langage doivent m'inspirer assés de confiance pour laisser le sort de ma pièce dépendre d'un homme qui se soucie aussi peu de l'ouvrage que de l'auteur, qui est accoutumé à estropier tous ses rôles, et qu'enfin le public a pris dans la plus grande déplaisance, et avec juste raison. J'avais compté sur ses efforts et son exactitude, quand je lui ai confié un rôle, mais après ce que j'en ai vû, je ne balancerais pas à retirer la pièce, plutôt que de l'y laisser jouer. Heureusement M. Fleury qui a autant de zèle et d'honnêteté que d'intelligence et d'âme, m'a promis d'être prêt pour mercredi ou jeudi prochain. Ainsi la pièce qui dans l'état des choses n'aurait pû jamais être jouée lundi, n'éprouvera aucun retard.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

Samedi 24

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] J. B. Jacques Nourry Grammont de Roselly; see letter 44, note 2.

38. La Harpe to Jean Maudit, called *Larive*

[November/December 1781]

J'ai causé, monsieur, avec quelques uns de vos camarades, sur la possibilité de faire servir l'habit de Ladislas[1] pour le rôle du roi de Hongrie, et il m'a paru qu'on y trouvait de grandes difficultés. Au fond, il faut de toute nécessité un habit guerrier, et le manteau long polonais ne peut guères s'y adapter. De plus, vôtre habit de Ladislas n'est point du tout marquant, et il est nécessaire que celui du roi de Hongrie soit de cette nature. Enfin, l'habit polonais qui est comme formant un contre-sens palpable et choquant dans un personnage hongrois. Si mes intérêts, quels qu'ils fussent, avaient

formé le moindre obstacle à ce que la Comédie payât vôtre habit, je les sacrifierais sans peine, mais on m'a bien assuré que la Comédie n'avait consulté que ses propres intérêts et ses usages. C'est à vous, Monsieur, de voir, si vous croyés que pour l'intérêt de la pièce, pour la convenance du costume, pour vôtre propre avantage, car il y en a à être bien mis dans un rôle, enfin pour m'obliger moi-même qui attends beaucoup de cet ouvrage, il convient de faire un léger sacrifice, que vous ne me devés pas sans doute, mais que la confiance entière que j'ai en vous a peut-être mérité.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que vous me connaissés,
Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

mardi au soir

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur DelaRive, / &c. /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

Larive cut his hand during a rehearsal on the morning of Tuesday 27 November 1781, and the first performance was held back until Wednesday, 12 December 1781 (see letter from Dazincourt in *Journal de Paris*, 28 November 1781).

[1] in Rotrou's *Venceslas*, reworked by Marmontel and performed by the Comédiens français on 30 April 1759.

39. La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

[*c.*13 December 1781?]

Je prie Monsieur Delaporte de porter sur le rôle de M. Grandmon les retranchemens et changemens suivans:

dernière scène du second acte:

Le Hongrois nous trompait:

après ces mots, rayés jusqu'à ce vers:

Que dis-je? ses soupçons &c., et rejoignés ainsi:
Le Hongrois nous trompait: son amour qui m'outrage
D'Amélie à mes vœux dispute l'héritage.
Que dis-je? Ses soupçons &c. jusqu'à ce vers:
Ne me dût un secours plus prompt et plus fidèle.
Après lequel terminés l'acte par ces 2 vers:
Va rejoindre nos chefs et les rassemblés tous,
Je veux armer les mains qui vont porter les coups.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

Before the second performance of *Jeanne de Naples* on 15 December 1781, La Harpe made some cuts in the first scene of the play, and suppressed some lines in the last scene of the second act (*Correspondance de Métra*, 16 December 1781, xii.209; *Journal de Paris*, 17 December 1781). Does this letter contain part of these changes? In any case, these given here do not correspond with act II, scene 6 as it is printed. It appears that La Harpe later restored the suppressed lines.

40. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Lorsque vous m'avés annoncé l'intention où vous étiés de jouer *Jeanne de Naples* les petits jours comme les grands, et que vous avés ajouté que les règlemens vous en donnaient le droit, je n'ai pas insisté longtems sur les raisons que j'avais de m'y opposer, d'abord, parce que je n'avais pas mes preuves sous les yeux, ensuite, parce que je me réservais d'examiner avec attention cette question très importante, et qui ne peut être traité que par écrit, seule manière de discuter avec la certitude de s'entendre.

Comme nous ne devons de part et d'autre chercher que la vérité et la justice, je ne puis croire que vous me sachiés mauvais gré de persister dans une opposition que je crois légitime, et si je ne m'offense point que la comédie élève une prétention qui m'est contraire, personne de vous, Messieurs, ne doit être faché ni surpris

que je démontre que cette prétention est illusoire. Cette démonstration est la plus forte de toutes: elle est fondée sur les faits.

Quand je me suis appuyé sur la clause capitale du règlement qui veut que cette parité entre les grands et les petits jours soit établie et constatée aux yeux du public *pendant trois mois, avant d'y soumettre les nouveautés*, on m'a répondu par acclamation *que cela s'est fait.* Voici, Messieurs, comme *cela s'est fait.* J'ai sous mes yeux le relevé de toutes les représentations depuis le premier janvier 1781 jusqu'au dernier décembre: (le règlement est du 9 décembre 1780) j'ai voulu vérifier si, à quelque époque que ce pût être, je trouverais *pendant trois mois* les mardis, jeudis et vendredis, (car je ne regarde pas le dimanche comme un mauvais jour) remplis des mêmes pièces que l'on joue ordinairement les lundis, mercredis et samedis, seule manière de prouver au public qu'il n'y a plus *de distinction entre les jours grands ou petits*; et sur 327 représentations j'en ai trouvé *vingt* dans le courant d'une année entière et de loin à loin, où l'on ait donné de grandes pièces les petits jours; huit jeudis, neuf mardis, trois vendredis; encore y a-t-il deux vendredis, veilles de fêtes solennelles et qui par conséquent prennent la place du samedi; encore dans ces grandes pièces faut-il compter *Le Jaloux sans Amour*[1] et *Richard III*[2], deux pièces tombées dans les règles et jouées sans succès.

A présent, Messieurs, permettés-moi de vous faire quelques questions. Est-ce sérieusement et de bonne foi que vous prétendés que 20 représentations semées dans le courant d'une année ont anéanti *toute distinction entre les grands et les petits jours*, termes exprès du règlement?

Est-ce sérieusement et de bonne foi que vous croyés que 20 représentations si éloignées les unes des autres et qui n'ont dû paraître que l'effet des circonstances du moment, ont accoutumé le public à croire qu'il n'y avait *plus de distinction entre les grands et les petits jours*, termes exprès du règlement?

Est-ce sérieusement et de bonne foi que vous croyés, d'après l'état actuel des choses qu'en jouant mon ouvrage les mardis et vendredis, vous ne nuirés ni à l'auteur ni à vous même et

que la recette sera la même qu'elle serait les mercredis et les samedis.

Non, messieurs, on ne ramène pas ainsi le public d'une habitude depuis si longtems établie, et quelques exceptions particulières que vous pourriés citer et qui tiennent à la mode et au moment, ne sont d'aucune valeur quand il s'agit d'un calcul journalier.

Vous objecterés et vous avés objectés que le Service de la Cour ne vous a pas permis d'en faire davantage. Mais prenés garde que cette réponse ne fait rien du tout à ma cause, et ne me regarde en rien. Ce n'est pas à moi d'examiner à quel point vous avés pû observer le règlement; et si le service de la cour se trouve en contradiction avec l'arrêt du Conseil[3], et que l'un empêche de faire ce que l'autre prescrit, ce n'est pas à moi d'examiner de les concilier. Ce qui est incontestable en tout état de cause, c'est qu'il est impossible de m'assujettir aux conséquences d'un règlement dont l'exécution n'a pas eu lieu, lorsque sans cette exécution, ces conséquences n'existent pas; et certes, si de deux parties engagées par un contrat conditionnel, l'une venait dire à l'autre: 'Je suis fâché de n'avoir pû exécuter les clauses de notre contrat; mais vous n'êtes pas moins obligée à faire ce que vous feriés, si je les avais remplies.' Pensés vous, messieurs, qu'on se crût même obligé de répondre à cette étrange manière de raisonner?

J'y ai répondu pourtant, parce que je suis persuadé que la Comédie n'a point de mauvaise volonté à mon égard, et parce qu'il était important de prouver à ceux qui ont cru cette question décidée, que dans l'état actuel des choses le règlement allégué ne serait qu'une arme meurtrière dans les mains de la Comédie pour étouffer les pièces dans leur naissance, et qu'au moyen du règlement mal rempli et mal interprété, elle pouvait dire à tout auteur: 'donnés moi votre ouvrage à condition que dans trois jours j'aurai le droit et les moyens de le faire tomber.' Ce traité vous paraît sans doute monstrueux; cependant, Messieurs, faites y attention. C'est celui que vous proposeriés aux auteurs. Au reste, sans examiner leurs prétentions, je proportionne les miennes à ce que je crois pouvoir raisonnablement espérer de mon travail, et je

suis bien aise, Messieurs, de vous faire voir qu'elles ne sont rien moins qu'illimitées. Je me propose de retirer ma pièce dans les 1[ers] jours de février, et je voudrais qu'on m'en donnât encore six représentations à différens intervalles, d'ici à la clôture. A cette époque, je laisserai la pièce au répertoire, et pour lors ne prétendant point de reprise, et ne la regardant plus comme une nouveauté, je consens que la Comédie en use comme de son bien.

Je suis, Messieurs, avec tous les sentimens qui vous sont dûs, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

11 janvier [1782][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Original, apart from holograph formal ending date and signature (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] Delaporte added 1781 on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] by Barthélemy Imbert, it was performed on 8 January 1781.

[2] a run of six performances between 6 and 21 July 1781.

[3] Arrêt du Conseil d'état du roi du 9 décembre 1780. The rules date, in fact, from 18 May 1781.

41. The Comédiens français to La Harpe

[13 January 1782][a]

La Comédie, Monsieur, ne peut entrer dans aucune espèce de traité avec vous. Les nouveaux règlemens sollicités par MM. les auteurs s'y opposent, [b]et il ne nous est permis que de vous exprimer la reconnaissance que nous inspirent vos offres honnêtes[1]. La Comédie ne peut pas non plus, monsieur, se départir du droit qui lui appartient d'alterner les nouveautés, après avoir alterné autant qu'elle l'a pû les pièces anciennes et modernes. Cependant comme votre demande ne nuit pas dans les circonstances actuelles à l'intérêt ni au droit de la Comédie, elle consent volontiers de faire jouer votre tragédie mercredi prochain comme vous le désirez[2]. Elle s'estime heureuse de pouvoir sans aucun inconvénient déferer

à votre demande et vous donner cette nouvelle preuve de son attachement de ses égards et de son estime.

Nous avons l'honneur d'être.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original in the hand of Desplan (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] Delaporte has added at the top of MS1 'Lettre à M. de la Harpe du 13 Janvier 1781'. [b] The rest of this sentence and the beginning of the next have been added in the margin of MS1. The beginning of this addition has been crossed out and read originally: 'Mais elle n'en sera pas moins reconnaissante. &c.'

COMMENTARY

[1] this is a reference to the forthcoming Arrêt du conseil d'état on 16 February 1782. The first agreements between the authors and the actors date from 1780. The actors signed on 11 March and the authors on 7 May 1780. The agreements were ratified by the Gentilshommes de la Chambre du Roi on 17 March and 11 May respectively.

[2] a performance of *Jeanne de Naples* was promised for Wednesday 16 January 1782 in the *Journal de Paris*, but it was then replaced by *Rodogune*. See letter 42.

42. La Harpe to the semainiers of the Comédie française

Messieurs,

Vous conviendrez, sans doute, que jamais ouvrage nouveau n'a été plus traversé par les circonstances que *Jeanne de Naples*[1]. La maladie de M[de] Vestris qui a suspendu la pièce pendant 15 jours, dans la chaleur de son premier succès; la nature même de son rôle qui ne lui a permis de jouer que deux fois la semaine, et la facilité que cela donne à la Comédie de mettre dans les intervalles ce qui attire le plus de monde en comique et en tragique, et par conséquent d'épuiser le public qui ne peut guères se porter quatre jours de suite au même spectacle avec la même affluence; tous ces obstacles plus grands pour moi que pour tout autre, parce qu'ils favorisent la mauvaise volonté de mes ennemis qui tirent parti de tout, m'ont fait éprouver dans les deux dernières représentations de Jeanne de Naples une diminution sensible. Je ne reproche rien à la

Comédie; je ne m'en plains point. Je sais quelle est sa situation, et je conçois qu'elle doit faire tous ses efforts pour réparer ses pertes; mais par la même raison qu'elle, je dois songer à mes intérêts, et c'est ce qui me détermine à céder aux circonstances, et à retirer mon ouvrage dès aujourd'hui. Je n'ignore pas que je n'aurai point le droit d'exiger une reprise; mais aussi je suis persuadé que lorsque la Comédie trouvera l'occasion de placer favorablement une tragédie qui a été accueillie du public; elle s'y prétera d'autant plus volontiers que ce sera pour l'auteur un dédommagement bien légitime de tous les dégoûts qu'il a essuyés.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens qui vous sont dus,
Messieurs,
Votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

à Paris ce 15 Janvier 1782

[*address:*] A Messieurs, / Messieurs les Semainiers / de la Comédie Française /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] the fact that La Harpe had withdrawn the play is announced in the *Journal de Paris*, 17 January 1782, p.68. The fifth performance was originally promised for 26 December 1781, but was held back until 3 January 1782; see *Correspondance de Métra*, 9 January 1782, xii.243. When was this rôle taken by mlle Raucourt (see the preface to the play; *Œuvres*, ii.301)?

43. *La Harpe to the Comédiens français*

Messieurs,

Quand j'ai eu l'honneur d'écrire à la Comédie pour lui exposer les motifs très plausibles qui m'engageaient à interrompre les représentations de Jeanne de Naples, on ne m'a point fait l'honneur de me répondre. Quand j'ai redemandé mon manuscrit dont j'avais besoin, M. de la Porte m'a répondu qu'il avait *ordre de ne*

point me le rendre, sans me donner d'autre raison. Cette manière d'agir, absolue et injurieuse, cet oubli de tous les égards me paraît trop incompatible avec toutes les démonstrations de bienveillance et d'honnêteté que j'ai reçues de vous, Messieurs, pour que je puisse l'imputer à une résolution unanime de la Comédie, et j'aime beaucoup mieux croire qu'au milieu de toutes les affaires qui vous occupent, vous avés fait peu d'attention à celle là, et que j'ai tout au plus à me plaindre de la mauvaise volonté de quelques personnes que sans doute leur société n'avouera pas.

Il m'est revenu indirectement que si l'on m'avait refusé mon manuscrit, c'est que la Comédie prétendait être propriétaire de mon ouvrage. C'est la chose du monde que je puis le moins imaginer. Vous devés, messieurs, connaître vos règlemens. Je les ai tous sous les yeux, anciens et nouveaux. Il n'y en a pas un qui autorise cette prétention insoutenable. Il est bien vrai, et j'en suis convenu moi-même dans ma dernière lettre, que n'ayant pas eu douze représentations de suite, je n'ai point le droit d'une reprise, mais il est tout aussi vrai et tout aussi sûr que dans le cas où il vous conviendrait, messieurs, de reprendre cette Pièce, elle seroit encore à moi, jusqu'à ce qu'elle tombe encore deux fois dans les règles, condition unique et indispensable sans laquelle les Pièces ne peuvent pas vous appartenir[1]. Je l'ai retirée, parce qu'on a fait le possible pour lui nuire, et il me semble qu'il m'est au moins permis de deffendre ma propriété, quand on se permet tout pour me l'enlever.

En effet, Messieurs, après avoir établi ce qui est de droit rigoureux, j'ajouterai que la Comédie, en se reposant sur les nouveaux règlemens qui lui donnent tant de facilité pour acquérir les ouvrages, devrait au moins prendre garde à ne pas montrer trop ouvertement ce désir si peu délicat de dépouiller les auteurs avant le temps. Je ne me permets cette observation que par intérêt pour la Comédie, et parce que je suis sûr que cette manière de penser est celle de ses membres les plus distingués. Elle a des ennemis qui épient dans ce moment tous les torts qu'elle peut avoir. Il seroit triste pour ceux qui lui sont attachés et dont elle n'a jamais eu à se

plaindre de fournir malgré eux des armes à ceux qui cherchent à la détruire.

Je m'en tiens, pour ce qui regarde *Jeanne de Naples* aux propositions que j'ai déjà faites. Le règlement qu'on m'a opposé et qui deffend de *traiter à forfait*, n'a lieu que pour les ouvrages qu'on présente et non pour ceux qu'on remet à volonté. Je désirerais qu'on remît *Jeanne de Naples* entre *Le Flatteur*[2] et *Agis*[3], et qu'on m'en donnât six représentations après lesquelles je la laisserai à la Comédie[4]; dans le cas même où cet arrangement ne pourrait pas avoir lieu, ce que je ne crois pas, il me semble qu'il est de l'intérêt de la Comédie d'avoir une pièce de plus au répertoire, et après la nouveauté et la reprise, il est impossible que je ne sois pas le maître de renoncer à ma propriété, plutôt que de nuire à mon ouvrage que tant de circonstances peuvent mettre dans les règles.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

jeudi 31 janvier [1782][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added in another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] the takings were as follows: 12 December, 2979 livres; 15 December, 2717; 17 December, 2090; 22 December, 2303 livres 10 sols; 3 January, 2244 livres 10 sols; 6 January, 2047; 9 January, 1578 livres 15 sols; 12 January, 1452. Under the new rules of 1781 the *règles* or minimum takings allowed to an author were raised from 1200 livres in Winter (15 November-15 May) and 800 livres in Summer (15 May-15 November) (Rules of 1766, Article VIII, 16) to 2300 livres in Winter (1 November-15 May) and 1800 livres in Summer (15 May-1 November) calculated on the takings at the door and the subscriptions for boxes combined (Rules of 1781, Article VIII, 20, 22). In practice, this was to work out at 1500 livres in Winter and 1000 livres in Summer on the straight takings at the door. During this run, for instance, the subscriptions for boxes brought 803 livres 14 sols 2 deniers and life subscriptions 8 livres 6 sols 8 deniers to each performance. The play became the property of the actors if it fell below the limit twice in a row, or three times at different occasions.

[2] Lantier's *Le Flatteur* was performed on 15 February 1752.

[3] *Agis* by Laignelot was staged on 6 May 1782.

[4] he abandoned his rights on the play on 23 May 1788 when paid for a performance on 26 April 1788 (Comédie française).

44. *La Harpe to the Comédiens français*

Messieurs,

Quand un concours de circonstances défavorables m'a engagé à retirer mon ouvrage, il s'y joignait encore un motif bien essentiel, le désir de profiter de cet intervalle pour corriger et améliorer ma Tragédie. Si je ne me suis pas expliqué plutôt sur cette intention c'est qu'en sentant la nécessité de changer le 5ème acte[1] qui, aux représentations, m'a toujours paru faible et défectueux, je ne pouvais pas même encore entrevoir les moyens d'en faire un nouveau, et rien n'eut été plus déplacé que d'annoncer des corrections, sans être sûr de les faire. Aujourd'hui qu'à force de soins et de réflexions et avec les conseils de quelques amis, je crois être parvenu à rendre ce 5ème acte infiniment meilleur, je m'empresse de vous le communiquer, Messieurs, et je reviens à vous avec toute confiance, non plus pour discuter des règlemens, controverse triste et épineuse, mais pour remettre mes intérêts entre vos mains. Vous sentés, Messieurs, combien il devient important pour moi que *Jeanne de Naples* soit remise le plutôt possible, de manière que mes efforts et ma docilité puissent être de quelque prise, et que les changemens annoncés donnent à la pièce un intérêt nouveau. Je n'ignore pas, et je l'ai déjà dit, que je n'ai pas le droit de rien éxiger, et que c'est une véritable obligation que j'aurai à la Comédie. Mais du moment où je lui offre une occasion de m'obliger, sans inconvénient pour elle, je suis sûr qu'elle regardera un bon procédé de sa part comme la meilleure manière de répondre aux plaintes que je lui ai adressées. Il n'y a point de Tragédie prête. On va donner *le Flatteur*. Quelqu'en soit le succès, on peut donner *Jeanne de Naples* en même temps, et pour l'arrangement du jour, je m'en raporterai entièrement, Messieurs, à ce que vous croirés convenable, persuadé que deux nouveautés d'un genre différent ne peuvent pas se nuire. Les changemens distribués entre les acteurs sont peu de chose pour chacun d'eux et M^de^ Vestris, Mrs Brizard et DelaRive m'ont promis de les apprendre volontiers.

A l'égard du Rôle de *Tarente*, M. Grandmon étant rayé du tableau de la Comédie, je prie M. Fleury, qui l'avait déjà accepté, n'eût été le scrupule de la concurrence de vouloir bien s'en charger, aujourd'hui que ce scrupule ne peut plus avoir lieu[2].

Si la Comédie veut bien me rendre ce service, elle est la maîtresse, ce me semble, de regarder cette reprise comme une continuation, et alors il ne s'agit plus de conditions: tout rentre dans l'ordre accoutumé, et la pièce subira la loi des règlemens[3]. Je prie M. Delaporte de me renvoyer la minute de mes changemens, dès qu'il les aura porté sur le manuscrit de la Comédie.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

3 février 1782

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

1 'Dans le premier dénouement, joué en 1781, la Reine avouoit son crime devant les Etats assemblés, dévoiloit la part que Tarente y avoit prise, et se poignardoit aux pieds du tombeau de son époux. Louis de Hongrie, cédant à son indignation, provoquoit au combat le Prince de Tarente et l'immoloit à la vengeance de son frère. Cette catastrophe n'a pas eu de succès. Il est vraisemblable que, sur cet objet, l'Auteur a pensé comme le public, puisqu'il a cru devoir en imaginer une nouvelle. Voici quel est aujourd'hui le dénouement de Jeanne de Naples. Les Etats sont assemblés, on va déposer Jeanne et nommer un Roi. La Reine demande à être entendue avant l'élection; elle monte sur son trône, rend compte des crimes du prince de Tarente et des siens, et se poignarde aux yeux du frère de son époux. Le prince est arrêté sur le champ, et conduit, par ordre de Louis de Hongrie, au tombeau du feu Roi pour y recevoir la mort' (*Mercure de France*, 31 May 1783, pp.228-229).

2 see letter 37. Grammont disappeared in June 1782, and on 30 June 1782 was finally struck of the register.

3 the three performances in May 1783 were treated as such (Comédie française).

45. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Vous avés eu la complaisance d'accepter les changemens que j'ai faits au 5ème acte de *Jeanne de Naples*, et vous vous êtes engagés à les présenter au public. Permettés que j'aye l'honneur de vous rappeller vôtre promesse, et que je vous supplie de vouloir bien faire distribuer les changemens sur les rôles le plutôt possible, et indiquer un jour pour répéter le nouveau 5ème acte. On va, dit on, mettre un Drame la semaine prochaine[1]: mais M. Brizard n'y a qu'un rôle peu considérable et n'a dans *Jeanne de Naples* qu'une douzaine de vers nouveaux. Dans tous les cas, cette tragédie peut se jouer concurremment avec *Le Flatteur* où avec le nouveau Drame, et j'attends le moment pour faire paraître plus avantageusement mon ouvrage imprimé[2]. C'est un service que vous me rendrés, et j'espère trouver les occasions de vous marquer ma reconnaissance.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec les sentimens les plus distingués,

Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

lundi 18 [février 1782][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française). It passed at a Laverdet sale of 1854, no. 183, and Etienne Charavay sale of 10 May 1872, no.712.

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added in another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] *Henriette* by mlle Raucourt, performed on 1 March 1782.

[2] Paris, Baudouin 1783, in-8vo, pp.viii.87. Announced as printed in the *Mercure de France*, 31 May 1783, p.235.

46. La Harpe to the Committee of the Comédie française

[15 April 1782]

Il les prie de reprendre sa tragédie *Jeanne de Naples*. Il parle aussi de *Warwick*, qui n'a cessé d'être au répertoire.]

Le grand duc de Russie vient à Paris avec la grande duchesse dans le courant du mois prochain. Il désire de voir *Varvic* qu'il a joué à Pétersbourg, et c'est une occasion pour moi de faire ma cour à ce prince qui m'a comblé de ses bienfaits[1].

MANUSCRIPTS

The holograph is missing from the Comédie française, and passed at the Saint-Georges sale of 1865, no.300, and Etienne Charavay sale of 23 March 1888, no.91.

COMMENTARY

See the next letter.

[1] La Harpe was Paul's correspondent in Paris (see *Correspondance littéraire* &c.). In December 1774, Paul settled an annuity on La Harpe (Best.18119, 18130). It is not possible to say how much La Harpe earned for his services. The only document to come to light so far is a receipt for 595 livres on 13 October 1789 (offered in the *Revue des Autographes*; June 1907, p.8, no.124). Colnet (*Correspondance turque*, p.iii) suggests that La Harpe received 100 louis a year.

47. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

Lettre à M. de la Harpe en réponse à sa lettre du 15 avril 1782

M[onsieur],

La C[omédie] fr[ançaise] assemblée[a] hier, a entendu de nouveau la Lecture de la Lettre que vous lui avez adressé le 15 avril: elle me charge, Monsieur, de vous assurer, de sa part, que votre tragédie de Jeanne de Naples sera jouée après celle d'Agis. Quant aux autre objets de votre Lettre, elle vous prie instamment d'avoir

la complaisance de vous rendre, Lundi prochain 29 avril, à son assemblée du Répertoire; elle aura l'honneur de vous y recevoir, et de les arrêter avec vous.

J'ai l'honneur d'être . . . &c.

Ce 23 avril 1782

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] crossed out in MS1: 'a pris hier'.

COMMENTARY

In March 1782, La Harpe attributed the failure to get *Jeanne de Naples* re-staged to Brizard's illness (*Corr. litt.*, letter CLXI; *Œuvres*, x.463). It was not performed until 19 May 1783.

48. La Harpe to the semainiers of the Comédie française

Messieurs,

Suivant l'accord stipulé par feu M. Le Kain entre la Comédie et moi au sujet de la Tragédie de Varvic, je reconnais n'avoir plus de droits à prétendre à ma part d'auteur sur cet ouvrage, dès que la Comédie en aura donné trois représentations dans le courant d'une année, ou de suite ou à différens intervalles, et que ces trois représentations seront les dernières sur lesquelles je percevrai mes droits[1].

J'apprends dans le moment que *Molière*[2] est encore arrêté[3]. J'ai peine à concevoir qu'avec un peu de bonne volonté, on ne puisse pas mettre en 24 heures un rôle de 60 vers; mais je n'en suis que plus obligé à Melle. Olivier qui veut bien s'en charger[4]. Je vais lui écrire en conséquence et vous prie, messieurs, d'annoncer la pièce pour Samedi. Ce sera le premier que j'aurai eu depuis qu'on joue, car celui de la première semaine a été pour la Comédie. Je me suis prêté avec une certaine déference à tous ses arrangemens et puisqu'elle adopte celui de deux jours l'un, je dois avoir les bons jours comme les mauvais dans cet ordre une fois donné. On prétend que les jours sont égaux, mais je ne connais point de réponse

aux faits, et il est de fait que les mardi et les vendredi ont été mes plus faibles chambrées[5]. On a arrêté qu'Agis serait joué le mardi, et il est de droit rigoureux qu'une nouveauté n'en déplace pas une autre qui est en possession et qu'ayant été joué le Samedi, je dois l'être le lundi et le mercredi. C'est entre vos mains, Messieurs, qui en vôtre qualité de Semainiers devés veiller au maintien de l'ordre que je constate de nouveau les droits que j'ai, et la promesse qu'on m'a faite lundi dernier de n'y point donner atteinte.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

2 may [1782]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] see letter 8. When did La Harpe reduce his conditions? The play became the property of the Comédie française on 24 May 1783, when La Harpe was paid for performances of *Warwick* on 27 and 29 June and 23 November 1782. He was not paid for a fourth performance on 1 December 1782.

[2] *Molière à la nouvelle salle ou les Audiences de Thalie*. La Harpe had for a long time been advocating the reforms that the new theatre would bring (see *Journal de politique et de littérature*, 5 July 1777, ii.307-308).

[3] the eighth performance was held back from 25 to 30 April 1782, and there then followed a further gap until the ninth performance on Saturday 4 May.

[4] whom did she replace? Mlle Contat played La Vaudeville, Bouret played Baptiste, and Dugazon dressed up as a woman for La Muse du Drame.

[5] the takings were as follows: Friday 12 April, 3054 livres 11 sols; Saturday 13 April, 4539; Monday 15 April, 4607; Wednesday 17 April, 4359 livres 8 sols; Friday 19 April, 2641 livres 10 sols; Sunday 21 April, 4145 livres 3 sols; Tuesday 23 April, 2438 livres 18 sols; Tuesday 30 April, 2542 livres 2 sols; Saturday 4 May, 4047; Sunday 5 May, 3242; Sunday 12 May, 3037 livres 10 sols; Wednesday 15 May, 2358 livres 4 sols; Saturday 18 May, 2525 livres 9 sols; Tuesday 19 May, 3507; Friday 24 May, 1621 livres 17 sols. (Plus 845 livres 1 sol 4 deniers for the boxes and 8 livres 6 sols 8 deniers for the life subscriptions at every performance.) (Comédie française).

La Harpe received most of his royalties in an advance of 3000 livres. See the Receipt (Comédie française): 'Monsieur Bellot payera la somme de trois mille livres à compte à Monsieur de la harpe sur les représentations des Audiences de Thalie ou Molière à la Nouvelle Salle, à Paris ce 26 juin 1782.

Desplans.

reçu les trois mille livres à compte, ce 26 juin 1782

Delaharpe.'

He received the remaining 491 livres 17 sols 1 denier due to him on 24 May 1783 (Comédie française). Whereas before, writers got a ninth part of all the takings for a play in 5 acts, and an eighteenth part of all the takings for a play in one act, their rights were now fixed at 142 livres 16 sols in every 1000 livres for a play in 5 acts, 107 livres 2 sols for a play in 3 acts, and 71 livres 8 sols for a play in one act (Rules of 1781, article VIII, 21).

49. *La Harpe to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française*

[12 May 1782][a]

J'ai remis hier le rôle de Marguérite à Melle. Thénard, et comme il ne m'est pas possible de me transporter ce matin à la Comédie, je prie, Monsieur Delaporte de vouloir bien les distribuer dans l'ordre suivant:

Varvic,	M. Delarive
Edouard,	M. Fleury
Elisabeth,	Mde Vestris
Nevil,	Mde Suin
Suffolc,	M. Dorival
Summer,	M. Florence
Un officier,	M. Marsy

DELAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 is dated by Delaporte.

COMMENTARY

Warwick was performed on 27 and 29 June 1782.

50. *La Harpe to the Comédiens français*

Messieurs,

Je ne sais pas pourquoi la Comédie, n'ayant reçu aucun ordre pour déranger les nouveautés, n'a pas mis pour lundi *Molière à la nouvelle salle*, dont c'était le droit, et qui avait déjà assés souffert

de la représentation de vendredi, mise avec *Le Joueur*, en concurrence avec l'Opéra, où M. le Comte du Nord[1] était annoncé. C'était une raison de plus pour m'en dédommager lundi, et je puis ajouter que M. le Comte du Nord aurait revû la pièce avec plaisir, puisqu'il eut la bonté de me demander hier quand on la redonnerait. Je lui répondis que ce devait être lundi, et il était facile de la mettre avec la *Partie de Chasse*. Il est vrai que dans le cas où M. Préville aurait désiré de jouer dans deux pièces où M. le Comte du Nord ne l'aurait pas vû, je me serais fait un plaisir d'entrer dans les arrangemens, et je le lui dis hier, mais c'était à condition qu'on annoncerait Molière pour mardi avec Mithridate ou Inès, et il me l'a promis positivement; et je vois sur l'affiche *en attendant*. Il est difficile de traiter plus mal une nouveauté, en même temps qu'on affecte pour d'autres une prédilection si partiale. C'est une nouvelle preuve que rien n'est moins agréable que de travailler pour le théâtre français, même en y réussissant.

J'ai l'honneur d'être, Messieurs,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

26 may [1782]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

A sixteenth performance was promised for some time in the *Journal de Paris*, but never materialized.

[1] the pseudonym adopted by Paul of Russia. On La Harpe's constant calling on Paul during the latter's visit see *Correspondance littéraire*, June 1782, xiii.148-150 and La Harpe's *Corr. litt.*, letter CLXVII; *Œuvres*, xi.495-496.

51. La Harpe to the Premier semainier of the Comédie française

Je n'ai reçu qu'aujourd'hui, monsieur, en revenant de la campagne, la lettre par laquelle vous m'annonciés la lecture de Philoctète indiquée pour le mardi 4 juin. Je serais bien fâché qu'on se fût assemblé inutilement à cause de moi, mais j'ai su que le com-

missaire à qui l'on a dit que je n'étais pas à Paris, avoit été à temps d'en rendre compte à la Comédie. Il est survenu d'ailleurs un nouvel incident qui doit tout suspendre et dont je vous prie de vouloir bien instruire M[rs] les Comédiens en mettant ma lettre sous leurs yeux.

J'avais offert le rôle de Pyrrhus à M. Molé en lui envoyant la pièce. Après avoir été huit jours sans me répondre, il m'a fait dire positivement par m. son frère, qu'il ne pouvoit *pas se charger du rôle de Pyrrhus, m. de la Rive jouant celui de Philoctète; que Pyrrhus était un rôle subordonné, et qu'ayant le premier emploi, il ne pouvoit pas jouer en second avec M. de la Rive, chargé d'un premier rôle*[1]. Il serait beaucoup trop long et surtout très inutile de rapporter les raisons que j'ai opposées à ce refus et les réponses que l'on m'a faites: plus ses réponses sont étranges, moins je me permettrais de les répéter. Quoiqu'il en soit, il n'est point du tout dans mon caractère de vouloir contrarier personne, et je suis persuadé que si l'acteur ne reçoit pas un rôle d'aussi bonne volonté que l'auteur le lui confie, c'est tant pis pour tous les deux. Ce désagrément que j'éprouve pour la première fois, me fait craindre d'en essuyer un nouveau, si j'offrais moi-même à un autre le refus de M. Molé. En conséquence, je prie M[rs] les Comédiens de vouloir bien prendre sur eux de faire agréer le rôle de Pyrrhus à celui que cet emploi peut regarder après M. Molé[2]. Je destine le rôle d'Ulysse à M. Vanhove, celui d'Hercule à M. Grandmon[3]. Si cette distribution est arrêtée et convenue à la comédie, je serai prêt pour la lecture de Philoctète, le jour que l'on voudra choisir, mais sans cet arrangement que la publicité de la pièce et les dégoûts que j'éprouve, m'autorisent, je crois, à demander, il seroit bien inutile de faire une lecture excessivement fatiguante, et d'assembler la Comédie qui a tant d'autres affaires, pour une pièce qui pourrait n'être jamais jouée.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement,

Monsieur,

vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

mercredi 5 juin [1782]

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY
[1] see letter 30.

[2] Pyrrhus was finally played by Saint-Prix.

[3] it is difficult to say who took this rôle after Grammont's dismissal.

52. La Harpe to the Premier semainier of the Comédie française

Lorsque je reçus votre lettre, Monsieur, je venais d'écrire à M. le Maréchal de Duras sur le même objet[1]. Sa réponse en a occasionné une autre de ma part et une seconde de la sienne, et il fallait que toute cette discussion fût terminée, pour que je pusse avoir l'honneur de vous répondre. Le résultat est que mon intention dans ce moment ci est de faire mettre Philoctète à l'étude pour la rentrée. En conséquence, j'ai envoyé la pièce à M. de la Porte pour copier les rôles. Je n'oublie pas cependant, et je vous prie, Monsieur, comme semainier de vouloir bien rappeller à la Comédie, que lorsque j'ai cédé mon tour à M. Ducis pour *Roméo*[2], à la place de *Jeanne de Naples* qui était sur le répertoire, on m'a promis que cette pièce passerait tout de suite après *Le Roi Lear*[3], et comme M[de] Vestris ne peut jouer que deux fois la semaine, que M. Brizard ne joue pas dans Philoctète et que M. de la Rive n'a pas un rôle fatiguant dans *Jeanne* de Naples, il me semble qu'il serait très facile de mettre les deux pièces ensemble en les faisant alterner. C'est un moyen d'aller plus vite, et tout le monde y gagnerait. Je désirerais aussi que *Molière à la Nouvelle Salle* fût remis avec *Jeanne* la seconde semaine de la rentrée, seul temps convenable pour une reprise que je ne pense pas que la Comédie veuille me refuser[4]. Cet arrangement me serait avantageux et le serait aussi à la Comédie, parce que, suivant l'usage, je ne prendrais de part que sur la grande pièce.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement,
Monsieur,
vôtre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

16 mars [1783][a]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] added in another hand on MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] the rest of this exchange of letters has not come down to us.

[2] a fresh run.

[3] performed at Versailles on 16 January and in Paris on 20 January 1783.

[4] it was not performed again.

53. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

J'ai l'honneur de vous envoyer la distribution des rôles de la Tragédie des *Brames*, et de vous observer en même temps que cette pièce étant la 1ère à passer à Fontainebleau par sa datte de réception, je ne puis comprendre pourquoi *Numitor*, à ce qu'on m'assure, se trouve placé auparavant. Je vais écrire à M. le Maréchal de Duras pour réclamer mon droit, et vous prie, messieurs, de vouloir bien l'appuyer du témoignage de la Comédie, qui est intéressée elle même à ce que chacun soit joué à son rang. Cette primauté devient d'autant plus essentielle pour moi que dans le cas où M. Brizard ne pourrait apprendre que deux rôles pour Fontainebleau, je perdrais plus que personne si j'étais privé de l'appui de ses talens dans le rôle d'Obarez.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens que vous me connaissés, Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Delaharpe

21 juillet 1783

P.S. Je vous prie d'insérer ma lettre dans vos registres comme un acte authentique de ma juste réclamation.

Les Brames

Obarez,	M. Brizard
Akébare,	M. Molé
Timurkan,	M. Vanhove
Indamène,	Melle St Val

Arsès,	M. Florence
Tamor,	M. Marsy
un chef Patane,	M. Dunan.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

La Harpe wrote in September 1783: 'On avait mis encore sur le répertoire de la cour trois tragédies, *Macbeth*, de Ducis, *Numitor*, de Marmontel, et les *Brames*, qui sont de moi; mais les circonstances ne permettront, je crois, d'en jouer qu'une seule.... Brizard, qui a 700 vers à apprendre dans les *Brames*, et dont la tête et la mémoire sont extrêmement affaiblies ne peut pas être prêt avant la fin de novembre' (*Corr. litt.*, letter CXCIII; *Œuvres*, xii.139). *Les Brames* were staged at Versailles on 4 December, and in Paris on 15 December 1783.

54. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Une lettre de M. Ducis que j'ai reçue en arrivant de la campagne[1], m'apprend que les circonstances actuelles, ne lui permettant pas de profiter du tour que je lui ai cédé, il y a trois mois, il est obligé de me le rendre[2]. J'ai remis cette lettre à M. Florence qui peut la communiquer à l'assemblée. En conséquence, les Brames reprennent leur rang dès ce moment, et leur représentation ne dépend plus que des études de M. Brizard. Il m'a promis positivement que dès qu'il aurait joué Numitor qu'il étudie pour la Cour, il s'occuperait uniquement de son rôle dans les Brames, et serait en état de jouer à la fin de novembre. Il est possible que dans cet intervalle, la Comédie juge à propos de mettre une nouveauté, mais cet arrangement relatif à ses intérêts ne saurait nuire aux miens, ni empêcher que les Brames ne doivent passer, dès que M. Brizard sera prêt. C'est afin qu'on ne dise pas que j'ai laissé passer mon tour, que j'ai l'honneur de vous adresser cette lettre, dont l'objet est de mettre mon droit à l'abri de toute discussion.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, DELAHARPE

22 Septembre [1783]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

[1] La Harpe spent most of the summer staying with the family of Joseph de Laborde at the Ferté-Vidame (*Corr. litt.*, letter CXCV; *Œuvres*, xii.152-154).

[2] *Macbeth* had to be held back because of Larive's illness. See Ducis's letter in the *Journal de Paris*, 21 September 1783, p.1091, and *Corr litt.*, letter CXCIV; *Œuvres*, xii.145.

55. La Harpe to Emmanuel Félicité de Durfort, maréchal de Duras

[22 December 1783][a]

Monseigneur,

Il s'est introduit depuis quelques années dans la litérature un abus si préjudiciable aux auteurs qui composent des pièces de théâtre et aux comédiens qui les représentent, que, pour le faire cesser, ils n'ont plus d'autre ressource que de réclamer votre justice et votre autorité. De tout temps le Mercure seul était en possession de parler des pièces de théâtre, et ne paraissant qu'à des époques plus ou moins éloignées, un ouvrage avait tout le tems de produire son effet avant qu'on en fît l'analise. Aujourd'hui, le Journal de Paris et les Petites Affiches, qui paraissent tous les jours, se sont arrogé le droit de juger une pièce de théâtre le lendemain de la première représentation[1]. Ces feuilles, à raison de l'utilité dont elles sont pour beaucoup d'objets, sont dans les mains de tout le monde; et dans la classe nombreuses des personnes qui fréquentent le spectacle, on sçait combien il y en a qui s'en rapportent entièrement aux journaux, et qui n'ont d'autre avis que celui qu'on leur donne.

Il arrive de là que si le journaliste est ignorant ou partial (et combien il est rare qu'il ne soit pas l'un ou l'autre!), l'auteur est livré à sa discretion. Un extrait infidèle et ridiculement rédigé, un exposé faux des effets que l'ouvrage a produits, enfin tout ce que la malignité peut inventer pour décrier une nouveauté, en voilà assés pour influer beaucoup sur l'opinion du moment, et pour

remplir le but que se propose un journaliste animé par l'esprit de parti, c'est-à-dire pour empêcher beaucoup de personnes d'aller juger la pièce au théâtre. Il est pourtant bien évident que tant qu'elle n'est pas imprimée, elle a besoin d'être vüe pour être jugée, et que c'est faire un très grand mal à l'auteur qui n'a aucun moïen de défense, que de se mettre entre le Public et lui, et d'établir arbitrairement dès le premier jour une décision toujours si facilement adoptée par la multitude crédule et peu instruite.

Le seul moïen d'obvier à cet abus, si propre à déranger les talens, c'est que les journaux qui ont le dangereux avantage de paraître tous les jours, ne puissent rendre compte d'une pièce et de son succès que lorsqu'elle a été imprimée. Alors son sort est fixé par le Public, et l'ouvrage et la critique sont sous les yeux du Lecteur: Cette demande paraît si juste que nous n'avons pas craint, Monseigneur, de la soumettre à votre équité et de nous joindre aux comédiens français et Italiens pour obtenir qu'il soit fait défense expresse aux Auteurs du Journal de Paris et à celui des Petites Affiches de parler en aucune Manière quelconque d'un ouvrage de théâtre avant l'impression. Nous n'avons point la folle prétention de n'être point critiqués: mais nous réclamons le droit d'être du moins entendus, et nous attendons, Monseigneur, de la protection que vous annoncés aux gens de Lettres, que vous ne souffrirés pas qu'on ajoute de nouveaux dégoûts et de nouveaux obstacles à tous les dangers d'une carrière si pénible à parcourir.

MANUSCRIPTS

Contemporary copy (Comédie française).

EDITIONS

Revue retrospective (Paris 1838) 3 s. i.191-192.

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] written in another hand at the top of MS1: 'Par M. de la Harpe. 22 x^bre 1783'.

COMMENTARY

The *Journal de Paris* replied to this on 15 January 1784 (pp.69-70) with a satire called *L'Eléphant roi*, in which the main hero was La Harpe, with other characters being Ducis, Marmontel and Lemierre. According to Meister (*Correspondance littéraire*, January 1784, xiii.472) it was unjust to include Lemierre as he had been one of the few writers who had refused to sign the petition. Unfortunately, the list of signatures had disappeared.

[1] La Harpe had written a letter of complaint to the *Journal de Paris*

(21 June 1783, p.719) six months before, on this very subject: 'Quant à la manière dont on rend compte tous les jours dans différents Journaux, des ouvrages qui m'appartiennent, . . ., je n'y puis jamais remarquer que le plus ou moins d'efforts pour les défigurer, les travestir, les tronquer; plus ou moins de mauvaise foi dans les censures et de malignité dans les louanges.'

56. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

J'apprends qu'on a mis sur le répertoire *Le Roi Lear*[1], et ce nouvel arrangement m'oblige à de nouvelles observations, relatives à mes intérêts que je ne dois pas oublier, et aux engagemens que la Comédie a pris avec moi, et que sans doute elle veut tenir.

Si cette reprise du Roi Lear attire beaucoup de monde, comme on a lieu de le présumer, la Comédie voudra, comme de raison, en tirer tout le parti possible. Alors *Macbet* est reculé[2], et que devient la promesse qu'on m'a faite de placer *Coriolan* au plus tard à la première semaine de Carême? Il arrivera donc, en cas que Macbet ait le succès qu'on doit en espérer, que M. Ducis remplira tout l'hyver avec ses deux pièces, et que moi qui sacrifie mes droits aux circonstances actuelles et au désir de ne point contrarier les intérêts de la Comédie, je me trouverai encore la victime de ma bonne volonté et de la délicatesse de mes procédés. Je l'ai été trop souvent, Messieurs, et j'ai trop de raisons, d'après votre propre jugement, de compter sur Coriolan comme sur un ouvrage qui peut me dédommager de tout ce que j'ai souffert[3], pour ne pas tenir très fortement à tout ce que je dois attendre et de cette Tragédie et du zèle que vous m'avés montré pour en hâter le succès. Je demande donc et j'attends de votre équité, Messieurs, que quelque soient vos arrangemens, vous vouliés bien me donner l'assurance positive que Macbet sera prêt, comme il peut l'être pour le 10 janvier, et que Coriolan le soit pour le 18 février. Ces deux époques fixées laissent à Macbet et à Coriolan tout l'espace nécessaire pour le cours de leurs représentations, en cas de succès. Si celui du *Roi Lear* ne pouvait pas s'accorder avec cet arrangement,

le seul qui puisse me convenir, alors je serai forcément dans le cas de réclamer mon droit et de reprendre mon tour pour faire jouer Coriolan, immédiatement après le Roi Lear; et sans doute, Messieurs, vous ne trouveriés pas juste que l'on fît tout pour un auteur, et que l'on refusât tout à l'autre.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,
Messieurs,
votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

25 décembre [1783]

MANUSCRIPTS

Original with holograph formal ending, date and signature. (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

Coriolan was first performed on 2 March 1784 'au profit des pauvres', and for this occasion took either the turn of *Le Jaloux* by Rochon de Chabannes or that of Beaumarchais' *Mariage de Figaro*.

[1] the *Journal de Paris* continued to announce it 'en attendant' in January 1784, but it does not appear to have had a fresh run at this time.

[2] it was first performed on 12 January 1784.

[3] he is referring to the failure of *Les Brames* which he withdrew after only two performances when the takings fell from 3523 livres to 1262 livres, 5 sols (Comédie française). See the letter in which he announces that he is withdrawing the play in the *Journal de Paris*, 19 December 1783, p.1453. He blamed this failure on Brizard's weakness following his illness (*Corr. litt.*, letter CXCIX; *Œuvres*, xii.173-174).

57. Françoise Marie Rosette Gourgaud, madame Vestris to Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française

Mr de la Harpe, mon bon ami, vous prie justement de vouloir bien soufler sa pièce mardy et, par conséquent, de venir ce matin et demain à la répétition, et d'envoyer Mr Bonneval à Versailles pour moi, mon ami, qui ai appris mon rôle très vitte; qui ne le sais pas trop; qui aurai ce jour-là plus peur qu'à l'ordinaire. Je vous

en prie, je serais bien fâchée de faire de la peine à personne, mais je ne puis m'exposer dans la position où je suis. De plus, toute la pièce n'est pas sûre et nous avons tous besoin et grand besoin de vous. Mais il faut que vous ayés la complaisance de venir aux répétitions. La Harpe et moi nous vous le demandons en grâce. Bon jour, mon ami.

ce dimanche [29 février 1784][a]

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur de la / Porte chez luy /

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES
[a] in another hand on MS1.

58. La Harpe to m. l'abbé Drugny de Colsenel

Ce serait, Monsieur, à ceux qui reçoivent au nom des pauvres une grande partie du fruit du travail des comédiens et des auteurs dramatiques, ce serait à eux sans doute, plus qu'à tout autre, à secourir un ecclésiastique honnête qui a le malheur d'être dans le besoin sans avoir mérité d'y tomber; mais comme l'humanité et la bienfaisance sont des devoirs de tous les états, et ne sont pas d'ailleurs moins prêchés au théâtre qu'au sermon, je ne puis qu'approuver le conseil que vous a donné M. Brizard; et puisqu'il pense que le témoignage que je puis vous rendre peut vous être bon à quelque chose, je vous autorise très volontiers à en faire usage, et désire fort qu'il puisse remplir ses espérances et vos vues; mais je dois cette justice à ceux à qui vous vous adressés, que leur générosité envers les malheureux n'a jamais eu besoin d'autre sollicitation que le malheur même.

J'ai l'honneur d'être très parfaitement,
Monsieur,
votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,
DELAHARPE

Ce 7 mars [1784]

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur l'abbé Drugny de / Colsenel, rue des Anglais / vis à vis la rue du Plâtre / chés une marchande de / Tabac. à Paris /

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

EDITIONS
Revue retrospective (Paris 1837), 2 s. x.296-297.

59. *La Harpe to the Comédiens français*

Messieurs,

Je suis obligé de mettre en ce moment sous vos yeux une petite discussion que j'ai eue avec M. Bellot, lors des représentations de Philoctète, au sujet des billets de Galerie. J'ai toujours vû que l'on calculait par le nombre des représentations celui des billets que l'auteur a droit de donner et qu'il suffisait que l'un n'excédât pas l'autre. Suivant ce principe, j'ai donné tantôt plus, tantôt moins de billets, et il s'est trouvé, calcul fait que j'étais même resté au dessous de ce que les règlemens passent à l'auteur. Cependant, M. Bellot m'a retenu 60^{tt}, parce que j'avais mis sur quelques représentations les billets que je n'avais pas donnés dans d'autres. C'est une bagatelle, mais comme j'avais toujours ignoré le règlement nouveau dont il s'autorise, et que je l'ignore encore, j'ai excepté de ma quittance générale[1] les soixante francs contestés, et je vous prie, Messieurs, de vouloir bien prononcer sur cet article afin qu'à l'avenir, et dès ce moment je puisse savoir à quoi m'en tenir.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que vous me connaissés,

Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

lundi 8 [mars 1784][a]

MANUSCRIPTS
Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES
[a] supplied in another hand at the top of MS1.

COMMENTARY

[1] 'Pour acquit, n'entendant comprendre dans cet acquit soixante livres retenues pour excédant de billets de Galerie, que je ne crois pas devoir et sur lesquels la Comédie prononcera. Ce 16 juillet 1783. Delaharpe' (Holograph, Comédie française).

60. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

M. Florence est venu me porter des plaintes au nom de la Comédie et au sien propre, prétendant que j'avais *manqué à mes engagemens*, et que je l'avais *compromis* auprès de ses camarades, le tout au sujet des représentations de Coriolan, données dans la semaine de clôture et dans celle de rentrée. Quant aux plaintes qui le regardent personnellement, je sais le cas que j'en dois faire, et vous allés en juger vous-mêmes; mais pour ce qui concerne la Comédie, je ne dois pas souffrir qu'on y élève le moindre nuage sur ma délicatesse, ni sur mon attention à remplir mes promesses. Je vais donc, Messieurs, vous rappeller les faits dans la plus exacte vérité.

La dernière fois que j'allai à l'assemblée, quelque temps avant la clôture, il fut question de la 7ème représentation de Coriolan, qui ne pouvait se donner que le mercredi de la dernière semaine, attendu qu'on jouait *Le Jaloux* le lundi, et que M. de La Rive avait demandé à partir le jeudi pour la province[1]. On me dit alors (et ce furent les propres mots de deux personnes qui portèrent la parole) *la Comédie ne donne point de part d'auteur dans la première et la dernière semaine.* Je répondis ces propres mots: *Si la Comédie a ce droit, j'aime mieux perdre ma part que d'interrompre ma pièce.* Depuis, lors de la rentrée, M. Florence m'écrivit pour me dire qu'il avait fait mettre la pièce au répertoire, persuadé, disait-il, que ma façon de penser était toujours la même, et je lui répondis par un billet de quatre lignes que je n'avais rien changé à mes arrangemens[2].

En dernier lieu M. Desplans me dit qu'il s'occupait de faire mes comptes, et il ajouta avec un air de doute: mais il me semble qu'il

y a des représentations sur lesquelles vous n'avés pas de droits, et que je ne dois pas porter sur mon calcul. Je lui dis là dessus: ceci est à discuter entre la Comédie et moi, faites toujours le relevé de toutes les représentations.

Voilà les faits. A présent, pour savoir si je suis *engagé* à ne rien demander à la Comédie des représentations dont il s'agit, il n'est question que d'un mot: la Comédie a-t-elle le droit de suspendre les nouveautés dans la première et dernière semaine, ou, si elle les joue, de ne point payer la part d'auteur? Car il est clair que lorsqu'on m'a dit: nous ne donnons point de part d'auteur, on est parti ou on a dû partir de cette supposition qu'on en avait le droit, et moi j'ai répondu *conditionnellement*, si cela était, je ne demandais rien. Il reste à montrer le règlement, car tout ce que j'ai promis, c'est de m'y soumettre, et je n'ai consenti à rien, si ce n'est d'être joué sans part d'auteur, dans le cas où l'on ne m'en devrait pas.

En voilà assés pour apprécier les griefs de M. Florence, qui, oubliant que c'est dans l'assemblée qu'on m'a parlé de ce sujet, et que c'est là que j'ai répondu, se fait très gratuitement mon représentant auprès de la Comédie, et celui de la Comédie auprès de moi, sans que qui que ce soit l'en ait chargé de part ni d'autre. Il prétend qu'il a *garanti ma parole*, et je réponds que je n'ai point donné de *parole*, et que si j'en avais donné une, il serait étrange[a] que j'eusse besoin de la garantie de M. Florence. La vérité est que je me souvenais très bien que pour *Molière à la Nouvelle Salle* et *Les Muses Rivales*, on m'avait dit précisément la même chose, et que cependant on m'avait payé les trois dernières représentations de l'une de ces pièces[3], jouées dans la semaine de clôture, et les deux premières de l'autre[4], jouées dans la semaine de rentrée, et cela sans aucune discussion; j'avais donc lieu de croire que la Comédie n'avait pas le moindre droit de refuser la part d'auteur dans ces deux semaines; car il est également certain qu'elle ne m'aurait pas fait un présent, et que je ne l'aurais pas reçu. Aussi n'ai-je jamais regardé cet usage prétendu que l'on m'alléguait pour les deux semaines en question que comme une manière de se faire valoir auprès des auteurs, qui ne pouvait pas avoir un

grand inconvénient, puisqu'on finissait toujours par les payer. J'ai dû même dans cette occasion, m'attendre d'autant moins à la plus légère difficulté, qu'après avoir donné aux pauvres une première représentation, après avoir été joué alternativement avec une autre nouveauté[5], après avoir été interrompu par la clôture, grâce aux querelles de la Comédie qui avaient retardé mon ouvrage pendant trois semaines; enfin, après avoir consenti, par égard pour les intérêts de la Comédie, que le *Mariage de Figaro* passât avant que mes représentations fussent finies[6]; après tous ces sacrifices, perdant encore un tiers de ma part, elle se trouverait réduite à peu près à rien[7]. Je suis bien sûr que ce n'est pas là votre intention, Messieurs, et si j'entre dans ces détails, ce n'est que pour faire sentir à quel point M. Florence *compromet* ses camarades quand il les fait parler et quand il vient me dire de leur part: J'ai promis à la Comédie en votre nom que vous ne demanderiés pas ce qui vous est dû. Il a même ajouté que M. Rochon ne demandait point sa part. J'ignore ce qui en est. M. Rochon est le maître de faire de son bien ce qu'il veut. Quant à moi, lorsqu'il a été question de procédés, j'ai prouvé à la Comédie, et plus d'une fois, que j'en étais capable; mais dès qu'il s'agit d'un droit je ne connais que les règlemens, sans lesquels on ne pourrait jamais compter sur rien. Je donne aux pauvres comme un autre, mais je ne vois pas de raison qui m'engage à rien donner à la Comédie, qui est infiniment plus riche que moi, et qui sûrement ne le voudrait pas. Aussi suis-je bien persuadé que sa réponse sera fort différente du langage que M. Florence lui fait tenir.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

17 May 1784

MANUSCRIPTS

Original with holograph formal ending, date and signature (Comédie française).

EDITIONS

Revue rétrospective (Paris 1837) 2s., x.297-300.

TEXTUAL NOTES

Delaporte has written at the top of MS1 two lines from Horace's Epistles (Book Two, 1, lines 175-176):
'Gestit enim nummum in loculos demittere; post hoc securus, cadat an recto stet fabula talo.
Horatii Epistolae'.

[a] crossed out in MS1: 'étonnant'.

COMMENTARY

The theatre was closed from 27 March to 19 April 1784.

[1] the fourth performance was also held back until 15 March in order to give Larive a rest after the performance at court on 11 March (see letter from La Harpe in *Journal de Paris*, 14 March 1784, p.333).

[2] this note has not come down to us.

[3] see letter 20.

[4] see letter 48.

[5] *Le Jaloux* by Rochon de Chabannes was performed on 11 March 1784.

[6] 27 April 1784.

[7] the takings were as follows (not counting those of the first performance which were given to the poor and which have been evalued as about 10,383 livres (*Journal de Paris* 3 March 1784, p.287): 6 March, 3302 livres; 10 March, 3194 livres 4 sols; 15 March, 2246 livres 6 sols; 19 March, 3136 livres 15 sols; 21 March, 3352 livres 10 sols; 24 March, 2520 livres 15 sols; 21 April, 2459 livres 4 sols; 25 April, 2684 livres 18 sols; 1 May, 1390 livres 18 sols; 9 May, 1829 livres 8 sols; 15 May, 1329 livres 12 sols. (Comédie française).

61. Delaporte, secretary of the Comédie française, to La Harpe

Réponse du S[r] Delaporte à la Lettre de M. de La Harpe du 17 Mai 1784 qui ne lui a point été envoyée

Monsieur,

La Comédie assemblée[a] a eu l'honneur de vous dire[b] qu'elle était dans l'usage de ne point donner de part d'auteur dans[c] *la première et la dernière semaine de l'Année*, qu'en conséquence elle ne jouait[d] point de nouveautés pendant ce tems, à moins que MM. les Auteurs ne consentissent à renoncer à leur droit pour ces deux époques seulement. Vous lui avez répondu, dites-vous dans votre lettre du 17 Mai, que *si la Comédie avait ce droit, vous aimiez mieux perdre votre part que d'interrompre votre Pièce.*

Cet usage, Monsieur, n'est point constaté dans ses Règlemens[e]; mais lorsque la Comédie assemblée, ayant à sa tête des Acteurs qui

l'honorent de leurs talens et de leurs conseils depuis plus de trente ans, vous a dit que cet usage existait, elle n'a pu vous dire qu'une vérité. [f]Et vous n'ignorez pas, Monsieur, qu'un usage constant a la force et l'autorité d'une Loi.

[g]La Comédie a donc le droit fondé par l'usage de ne point donner de part d'auteur pendant ces deux époques; mais elle [a] aussi celui d'en[h] donner relativement à des circonstances qui déterminent[i] sa justice ou qui motivent sa bienvéillance, [j]sans que cela puisse faire un titre contre ce droit.

Votre Pièce de Molière à la nouvelle Salle était destinée à son installation au Théâtre français; elle devait donc être jouée[k] pendant la première semaine: cette circonstance qui la faisait sortir[l] de la classe ordinaire des représentations lui a dicté la conduite qu'elle a tenue, parce qu'elle est juste: elle n'a point attendu d'observations[m] de votre part, et vous a donné[n], sans vous le faire remarquer, ni s'en faire un mérite auprès de vous, votre droit d'auteur dans toutes les représentations de cette[o] Pièce.

Aujourd'hui, Monsieur, la Comédie[p] s'est renfermée dans son usage, elle a eu l'honneur de vous en prévenir, vous y avez consenti. [q]Vous avez fait plus: vous avez répondu à M. Florence, qui vous avait écrit *qu'il avait fait mettre votre Tragédie de Coriolan au Répertoire, persuadé que votre façon de penser était toujours la même: — Que vous n'aviez rien changé à vos arrangemens.* Voilà l'exposé simple des faits. [r]Pouvez-vous après cela, Monsieur, réclamer votre droit d'Auteur dans les représentations exceptées par la convention?

M. Florence qui était premier Semainier à la rentrée du Théâtre, se croit responsable de ce qui s'est passé pendant son administration. Dépositaire des intérêts de la Comédie, ainsi que de votre réponse à sa Société[s] et de celle dont vous l'avez honoré depuis, il veut se [t]rendre le garant de l'un et de l'autre: c'est qu'il est très convaincu des sentiments honnêtes de sa Société, et qu'il ne peut pas douter[u] des vôtres, Monsieur, persuadé, comme il est, que Monsieur de la Harpe doit penser comme il écrit.

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph draft (Comédie française).

EDITIONS

Revue rétrospective (Paris 1837) 2 s., x.300-302.

TEXTUAL NOTES

The following words have been crossed out in MS1: [a] assemblée. [b] à une de ses assemblées. [c] remettre aux Auteurs leurs droits sur les Pièces pendant. [d] donnait. [e] et n'avait pas besoin d'y être; et. [f] et vous n'ignorez . . . de Loi. [g] Si la. [h] de la. [i] aux circonstances qui fondent. [j] circonstances. [k] être donnée à tous égards, et l'a été en effet. [l] sortait. [m] vos représentations. [n] les dr[oits]. [o] votre. [p] elle. [q] Prononcez. [r] Prononcez, Monsieur, et jugez. [s] la Comédie. [t] gara[ntir]. [u] que M. de la Harpe pense comme il écrit.

COMMENTARY

See Appendix I.

62. Pierre Jean Baptiste Gerbier to mm. les semainiers de la Comédie française

M. de la Harpe, Messieurs, sort de chez moi. Il m'a conté la difficulté qu'il à avec vous. Je n'ai pas voulu m'expliquer avec lui ni lui dire mon opinion, ne pouvant en avoir une sur son simple exposé. Mais l'article des procédés m'a paru exiger que j'aie l'honneur de faire part à la Comédie de mes réflexions. M. de la Harpe vous a écrit il y a eu hier huit jours et vous a demandé son payement. Ne recevant point de réponse, et ne pouvant regarder votre silence que comme un refus, d'après les difficultés qu'il sçait que vous lui faittes, il est venu me dire qu'il vous assigneroit jeudi, si demain il n'étoit pas payé, et il m'a prié de vous en instruire. Je suis persuadé, Messieurs, que l'intention de la Comédie n'est point de forcer M. de la Harpe à un éclat, ni d'avoir une querelle avec un des auteurs qui a le plus enrichi son théâtre. De pareilles discussions sont toujours infiniment fâcheuses, et je suis convaincu[a] qu'il n'est aucun de vous qui ne doive les éviter. Faittes donc part, Messieurs, à la Comédie des dispositions de M. de la Harpe, et engagez la à lui faire une réponse, qui le convainque que la Comédie n'est capable ni de l'oublier, ni de le traitter injustement.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec[b] un sincère attachement, Messieurs, votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

Gerbier

Ce 25 may [1784]

[*address:*] A Messieurs / Messieurs les Semainiers / Au Théâtre françois /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

MS1 is endorsed: 'Arrêter que pour éviter à l'avenir toute constatation sur l'usage constant de la Comédie depuis plus de 100 ans de ne rien payer aux auteurs à titre de part dans les représentations qui se jouent la 1[ère] semaine et la dernière semaine de l'année théâtrale, il sera désormais touttes les fois qu'on sera dans le cas de jouer une pièce à part dans les d. 2 semaines, fait une convention par écrit avec MM. les auteurs'. [a] written over in MS1: 'persuadé'. [b] written over in MS1: 'Messieurs'.

COMMENTARY

Gerbier was a noted lawyer, much admired by La Harpe for his speeches against Linguet (*Corr. litt.*., letter 1; *Œuvres*, x.23-35 &c.). He was on the advisory council of the Comédie française, and it was under his guidance that the authors drew up their proposed rules. Thanks to this letter, La Harpe was now to be paid in full on 27 May 1784 (Comédie française).

63. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

Messieurs,

Eloigné de Paris dans ce moment[1], et obligé par des considérations personnelles de garder l'anonyme, je regarde comme une de mes privations de ne pouvoir vous remercier de vive voix de tous les soins et de tout le zèle que vous avés apportés à la représentation de Virginie. Je ne saurais vous exprimer combien je suis flatté de tout ce qui me revient à cet égard sur l'énergie et le pathétique qu'on a remarqués dans les principaux rôles, sur l'ensemble parfait du 5[ème] acte, sur le choix et l'effet des décorations et même sur la manière très satisfaisante dont les rôles inférieurs ont été remplis. Permettés que j'adresse un remerciement particulier à

M. Naudé pour avoir appris si vite et si bien saisi le rôle difficile et ingrat d'Appius, et que je me félicite d'avoir été le premier à placer dans une nouveauté tragique le talent précoce de Melle Vanhove, si intéressant dans sa naissance[2]. Ses autres talens appréciés depuis longtems par le public, n'ont pas besoin de mes éloges; mais je crois devoir à tous les mêmes complimens, parce que je crois avoir à tous les mêmes obligations.

Je prie M. Delaporte de porter sur le manuscrit les coupures ci-jointes pour la fin du 3ème acte qui, à ce qu'on m'a dit, a paru languir, ainsi qu'un petit changement à la fin du 5ème acte. Celui qu'on a envoyé d'abord n'était pas de moi, mais d'un ami qui m'a suppléé pour le moment. Ce qu'il a fait est fort bien; mais je crois qu'il importe de fonder d'une manière plus positive et plus détaillée le principe de la révolution qui est la présence des légions, déjà aux portes de Rome. Les répliques ne sont point changées: il ne s'agit que de sept ou huit vers que je prie M. Dorival de vouloir bien apprendre avec tout le soin qu'il a mis dans son rôle[3].

Quant à la durée des représentations, il me semble qu'avec une pièce anonyme, qui par conséquent n'a point de prôneurs et qui est jouée dans une saison peu favorable, on ne doit guères prétendre que ce qu'il faut pour constater le succès et s'assurer une reprise avantageuse l'hyver prochain. Je m'en rapporte à votre bonne volonté, Messieurs, pour mener la pièce à douze ou treize représentations[4]. Le plaisir que l'ouvrage a fait généralement me fait croire qu'il peut reparoître cet hiver avec beaucoup d'avantage, et c'est une raison pour vous prier de la regarder (passé le moment de la nouveauté) comme votre propre bien. C'est un témoignage de reconnaissance que vous avés bien voulu accepter de la part de quelques auteurs, et je me flatte que vous ne la refuseriés pas de la mienne.

Je suis avec tous les sentimens que je vous dois,

Messieurs,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

L'AUTEUR DE VIRGINIE

20 juillet 1786

MANUSCRIPTS

Original (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

This is not the first time that La Harpe presented a play anonymously, but this time he seemed particularly anxious that his identity should not be uncovered. When his name was attached to the play on the list of performances at Fontainebleau in the political part of the *Mercure de France* on 12 November 1785 (p.82), La Harpe vehemently denied any connection in the *Journal de Paris*, 16 November 1785. He was not to admit his authorship until 5 May 1792, when he wrote to the *Chronique de Paris* (8 May 1792, vi.515). He said that the reason for presenting the play anonymously was that mlle Raucourt, who was to play Plautie, annoyed at being refused a rôle in an earlier play by La Harpe, had sworn never to accept another rôle in any of his plays. It would seem more likely that La Harpe was afraid of a possible ban on his work by the Comédiens français as a body (*Correspondance de Métra*, 7 October 1785, xviii.419; see Appendix II).

[1] this is not true. The day that this letter was written La Harpe turned up at the Académie française (*Registre des présences*; Académie française).

[2] she played Virginie.

[3] he played Valérius. The rôle of Icilius was taken by Saint-Fal. For changes in *Virginie* see Appendix III.

[4] it was performed ten times. The run lasted from 11 July to 2 September 1786. The play had a much greater success during the Revolution.

64. La Harpe to the Comédiens français

J'ai cédé à M. Voiron le tour de Menzicoff. à Paris ce 5 février 1787.

DELAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

This would appear to be a reminder, for Voiron's *Appel et Campaspe* had already been performed on 16 October 1786.

65. La Harpe to Antoine Dorfeuille

7 février 1788

Vous pouvez être sûr du plaisir que j'aurai toujours à recevoir des marques de votre souvenir et à faire ce qui peut vous être agréable. J'ai entendu dans une scène de Pyrrhus[1] le jeune homme que vous m'avez fait l'honneur de m'adresser et qui m'a paru

encore un peu neuf; mais il a le temps de se former et sa taille, sa figure et sa voix lui en laissent le moyen. Comme je puis à peine disposer d'un moment, je l'ai prié de remettre à la 15ne de Pasques le moment où je pourrais l'entendre avec plus de suitte et d'attention et d'autant plus à propos que dans ce même temps, *il m'a fait espérer que j'aurois le plaisir de vous voir à Paris. L'abbé De Lille a eu celui de vous voir joüer Philoctète à La Haye et m'en dit des merveilles. Vous avez fait fondre en larmes. C'est un bon présage pour le Début que vous projettiez ici et que sans doute vous ne perdez pas de vüe; nous avons grand besoin de talent et en mon particulier vous savez combien je m'intéresse aux vôtres, et avec quelle sincère estime, je serai toujours*[a], Monsieur,

Votre très h[umble] et t[rès] o[béissant] s[erviteur],

DELAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Contemporary copy (Archives Nationales, o¹844, no.275).

TEXTUAL NOTES

Written at the top of MS1: 'Copie d'une lettre de Monsieur De la Harpe de l'Académie française au S. Dorfeuille, l'original est entre les mains du S. Dorfeuille'. [a] the underlining would appear to have been added by Dorfeuille.

COMMENTARY

On 5 June 1782, when Dorfeuille was still an actor in Clermont-Ferrand, he preceded his *Mathurin d'Achères ou la Naissance du Dauphin* with an *épître* which contained the following lines:

> . . . vous êtes l'oracle de la France,
> Je ne suis qu'un mime ignoré.
> Pour exister, je cherche un père,
> La Harpe, soyez mon soutien. . . .

(see A. Demouget, 'Antoine Dorfeuille, auteur, acteur et révolutionnaire', *Revue d'histoire du théâtre* (Paris 1964), xvi.10). He made an unsuccessful début at the Comédie française in 1784.

[1] by Crébillon.

66. La Harpe to Jean Nicolas Fallet

Vous ne devés pas douter, Monsieur, que je ne confirme volontiers ce que j'ai déjà promis. [a]Vous pouvés prendre le tour de *Menzicoff* et je suis charmé d'avoir l'occasion d'obliger un homme de votre mérite.

J'ai l'honneur d'être avec toute l'estime et la considération que vous mérités,

Monsieur,

votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur, Delaharpe

1er may 1788

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Fallet &c. /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] it is impossible to read what has been crossed out here in MS1.

COMMENTARY

Fallet's *Alphée et Zarine* was performed on 19 June 1788.

67. La Harpe to Françoise Marie Rosette Gourgaud, madame Vestris

Dimanche 13 Juin [1790]

Je conviens avec vous, ma bonne amie, que les circonstances du mois de juillet peuvent balancer le désavantage de la saison; mais il faudrait être sûr de n'éprouver ni dérangement ni retard. Je demande donc que l'on me promette positivement de mettre Mélanie le 8 juillet au plus tard. Je sais que Barnevelt est à l'étude; il est plus ancien que Mélanie et doit passer auparavant[1]. Je crois aussi que les deux pièces ne peuvent pas se nuire l'une à l'autre, étant d'un genre très différent. Elles peuvent donc aller concurremment; mais deux représentations par semaine pour chacune des deux pièces et la représentation de M. de la Rive ne permettraient pas que l'on y joignît aucune autre nouveauté tant qu'elles iront ensemble, si ce n'est des petites pièces d'un acte. Voilà ce qui me paraît de convenance et de justice et conforme également aux intérêts de la Comédie et aux miens. Je joins ici la distribution que vous m'avés demandée. Je vous embrasse de tout mon cœur.

Delaharpe

Mélanie	Mde Petit[2]
Le Curé	M. Molé
Monval	M. de St Phal
M. de Faublas	M. Naudet
Mde de Faublas	Mde Vestris

[*address:*] A Madame, / Madame Vestris /

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

The Comédiens français finally got permission to perform *Mélanie* in November 1789, twenty years after it had been written (*Chronique de Paris*, 27 November 1789, i.383), and by the end of January 1790 the papers were talking of the plan to stage it (*Mercure de France*, 30 January 1790, p.240). However, it would now be held up by the split among the actors and would not be performed until 7 December 1791 at the *Théâtre de la rue de Richelieu*. Of the original cast list, only mme Vestris would keep her rôle. The other parts were taken as follows: Mélanie, Mlle Desgarcins; Le Curé, Monvel; Monval, Talma; M. Faublas, Desrosières.

[1] *Barnevelt* by Lemierre was performed on 30 June 1790.

[2] mlle Vanhove became mme Petit on 8 August 1786. She divorced on 26 April 1794 and became mme Talma on 16 June 1802.

68. La Harpe to the actors of the Théâtre de la nation

26 février 1792

Vous connaissés, Messieurs, la loi qui vous deffend de représenter aucun ouvrage d'un auteur vivant, sans son consentement par écrit, à moins qu'il ne vous en ait fait une cession en forme[1], et la tragédie de *Philoctète* n'est point dans ce cas d'exception. Je n'ai renoncé volontairement à ma rétribution que pour *Varvic*[2], *Jeanne de Naples*[3] et *Coriolan*[4]. A l'égard de *Philoctète*, je fus dépouillé de mon droit par ce que vous appelliés vos *règles*, c'est-à-dire, parce que deux représentations données dans les premières chaleurs du mois de juin et dans un temps où vous aviés perdu la moitié de vos petites loges[5], firent baisser la recette au taux que

vous aviez fixé pour vous approprier les ouvrages. Depuis ce temps vous savés combien de fois vous l'avés joué et l'argent qu'il vous a rendu. Je n'avais rien à dire alors, c'étoit le temps où l'usurpation était autorisée. Elle ne l'est plus aujourd'huy, et vous avés encore par la loi la confiscation de la recette entière de la Pièce que vous avés représentée hier. Il me serait très facile de vous y faire condamner, pour peu que j'eusse contre vous cette espèce d'animosité que vous m'avés supposée. Mais je n'en ai aucune, et quand je vous ai attaqués, je ne voulais que la liberté et la justice. J'ai obtenu l'une et l'autre par les secrets de nos Législateurs, et aujourd'huy je ne me regarde plus que comme un négociant qui vend sa denrée à celui qui la paye. Si j'ai refusé mes ouvrages à plusieurs Troupes qui me les demandaient, c'est que je ne les croyais pas en état de les jouer convenablement. Je ne les refuserais jamais à des acteurs qui me paraîtront pouvoir s'en charger. Il vous a plu de jouer *Philoctète*, je ne le trouve pas mauvais, pourvû qu'il vous plaise de me payer ma part d'auteur sur le même piëd que dans la nouveauté. A cette condition, vous pouvés à l'avenir jouer non seulement *Philoctète*, mais telle autre pièce de moi qui vous agréera. Tout ceci, encore une fois, n'est à mes yeux qu'une affaire de commerce. Mais en ce genre, comme en tout autre, je n'aime pas les affaires qui traînent, et je veux qu'on procède avec moi comme je fais moi-même, c'est-à-dire, nettement et promptement: je sais que ce n'est pas toujours votre manière, Messieurs, et c'est pour cela que je vous préviens que si demain à midi je n'ai pas votre réponse et un mandat pour être payé chés votre caissier, sur le bordereau de la représentation, je procéderai suivant la loi.

Delaharpe

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Comédie française).

COMMENTARY

This letter is interesting in that it shows La Harpe putting into action the laws of 13 January and 19 July 1791 which he did so much to bring about.

[1] see *Adresse des auteurs dramatiques* (Paris 1790), *Pétition*, article IV, p.24.

[2] see letter 48.

[3] see letter 42, note 4.

[4] *Coriolan* would appear to have fallen foul of the *règles* in 1784 (see letter 60, note 7). La Harpe was not paid for three performances of the play

in May 1787. If there was a formal deed of transfer, it has not come down to us.

[5] the subscriptions for boxes during the run in 1783 were down to 670 livres, 7 sols, 4 deniers (for the implications of this, see letter 43, note 1). The straight takings at the door at this time were as follows: 16 June, 5435 livres 8 sols; 18 June, 2385 livres 10 sols; 21 June, 2610 livres 17 sols; 23 June, 2885 livres 5 sols; 25 June, 1233 livres 6 sols; 28 June, 1052 livres 12 sols; 2 July, 1073 livres 18 sols. (Comédie française). If the subscriptions had been up to their usual level of about 800 livres the play would have been in no danger. However, with the low subscriptions, the play fell below the level twice, and did so twice in a row. Without counting the performance on 25 February 1792, the Comédie française had performed the play 28 times without paying La Harpe.

69. The Premier semainier of the Théâtre de la nation to La Harpe

Du jeudi 1[er] Mars 1792

M[onsieu]r,

La Comédie, pour répondre à votre Lettre aussi nettement que vous pouvez le désirer et aussi promptement qu'il lui a été possible nous charge à vous mander que si elle a joué Philoctète c'est qu'elle a cru en avoir le droit; vous le lui contestez; elle n'est pas convaincue; mais elle ne veut aucune discussion avec [a]M. Delaharpe. Vous recevrez, M[onsieu]r, votre rétribution comme vous la désirez.

MANUSCRIPTS

Original draft (Comédie française).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] crossed out in MS1: 'avec un homme tel que vous'.

COMMENTARY

La Harpe was paid 381 livres, 16 sols, 2 deniers as his royalties on the takings of 4035 livres, 16 sols (Comédie française).

70. La Harpe to Philippe Antoine Merlin (de Douai) minister of Justice

[*c*.15 July 1796][1]

Citoyen Ministre,

Au moment où l'on me donnoit communication d'une lettre de vous au Citoyen d'Abancourt, par laquelle vous vouliez bien m'offrir vos bons offices auprès du directoire, j'apprends que c'est à vous même qu'il envoye l'examen définitif[2] de l'affaire qui me concerne et qu'il est disposé à lever le mandat d'arrêt contre moi, s'il ne se trouve à la suite ni charges ultérieures ni commencement de procédure. Je ne pense pas que ni l'un ni l'autre ait pû avoir lieu. Si l'on avoit crû réellement que je fusse un des *provocateurs à la journée du 13 vendémiaire*; il n'est pas vraisemblable que l'on n'eût fait aucune espèce de poursuite contre moi pendant trois mois; et la date même du mandat d'arrêt, qui est du 5 ventôse[3] est une présomption de mon innocence à cette même époque. Il est vrai, une femme dont je partageois le domicile[4] a été arrêté comme prévenue de *conspirer de moi*; mais au bout de huit jours, elle a été mise en liberté et reconnue parfaitement innocente; c'est encore une présomption. Quant aux faits les voici:

J'ai été opposé, il est vrai, aux Décrets de fructidor[5]; mais ma conduite a toujours été renfermée dans les limites les plus strictement légale, et bien loin de *provoquer* la funeste et coupable journée du 13 vendémiaire, tout ce qui s'est passé à cette époque étoit contre mon opinion et contre mon vœu.

1° Je n'étois pas même à ma section lorsqu'on y adhéroit à l'arrêté de la Section Pelletier pour prendre les armes et l'on saisit, pour faire passer cette adhésion, une des Séances du Matin, où je n'allais jamais, et qui étoient peu nombreuses, &c.

2° Depuis ce moment, je n'ouvris pas la bouche dans l'assemblée, si ce n'est pour improuver fortement comme *illégale et innocente*, la démarche où l'on nous engagea le 11 par un mensonge très hardi, en nous assurant que la majorité des Sections se rassembloit

au Théâtre français d'après le *vœu de leurs Commettants*[6]. Envoyé par les mêmes à cette prétendue convocation, je reconnus l'imposture. Je m'en plaignis fortement, et revins au moment de la proclamation avec mes collègues[7]. A 7 heures j'étois à la Tribune de ma section, où je parlai dans le même sens devant deux mille témoins[8]. Je suis donc en cette circonstance, comme dans toutes les autres, hors d'inculpation, puisque je me suis conformé à la loi proclamée. Tous les faits que je rappelle ici sont publics.

3° Je défie qu'on apporte la moindre indice que j'aye eu jamais aucune espèce de rapport quelconque avec aucun des membres du Comité de la section Pelletier[9], ni de vive-voix ni par écrit. Je n'en connoissois pas un, et n'appris leur existence que le jour où, venant à ma section le soir, je trouvai tout le monde armé.

4° Je ne pus combattre cette Résolution, parce que je n'avois pas même été écouté dans l'effervescence générale. Mais le matin du 13 je redigeai, avec quelques uns des meilleurs Citoyens de ma section un projet d'arrêté pour le *désarmement* qui fut même envoyé à l'impression[10], mais qui ne put avoir d'effet, parce que ceux qui avoient ce soin de mesurer violence en précipitèrent l'exécution[11].

Voilà tout ce qui regarde ma conduite en Vendémiaire, l'un des motifs du mandat d'arrêt, sur lesquels vous paraissez désirer que je me *disculpe*. L'arrêté porte que je suis prévenu de *conspiration contre la sureté intérieure et extérieure*, &c. Vous n'exigerez pas, sans doute, que je prouve que je ne suis pas *conspirateur*: je pourrais exiger, si j'étais en jugement, qu'on prouvât que je le suis. Je crois en avoir assez dit pour vous, Citoyen Ministre, qui sans doute êtes disposé à me rendre justice, puisque vous vouliez la solliciter pour moi; et je vous dois déjà des remerciemens pour les offres obligeantes que contenait votre lettre, et pour la manière dont vous exprimés l'intérêt que vous voulez bien joindre à moi.

Salut et respect,

LAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Contemporary copy (Archives nationales, F[7]7151).

TEXTUAL NOTES

Written at the bottom of MS1: 'Pour ampliation: Abancour'.

COMMENTARY

After the *13 vendémaire*, La Harpe had to go into hiding in the house of the notary and book-lover, Antoine Marie Henri Boulard, in the rue Saint-André-des-Arts (Pierre Duviquet, *Notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de feu M. A. M. H. Boulard*, p.11). A 'mandat d'amener' against La Harpe was issued on 6 October 1795 (14 vendémiaire an IV) by the Comité de Sûreté Générale (Archives nationales F[7]7130), and this was followed on 27 December 1795 (6 nivôse an IV) by a 'mandat d'arrêt' from the Directoire (A. Debidour, *Recueil des actes du Directoire exécutif*, i.333). As a well-known critic of the Convention, La Harpe had become secretary of the Assemblée primaire of his section, La Butte des Moulins, at the beginning of October 1795, and his flat in the rue du Hasard (rue Thérèse) was to be searched by the local Commissaire de Police for 'les œuvres et les papiers' belonging to the section (Archives nationales, F[7]7151). In answer to the law of 21 fructidor which forbade communication between Paris and the rest of France and the Army, La Harpe led a deputation from his section to the section Le Pelletier on 8 September 1795 (22 fructidor an III), and gave a speech in favour of Le Pelletier's 'acte de garantie' (A. Aulard, *Paris pendant la Réaction thermidorienne*, ii.229-230). On 10 September (24 fructidor), he was appointed by his section to go and fraternize with the Army at Les Sablons (*La Quotidienne*, 25 fructidor an III, pp.2-3). By 27 September, it was rumoured that he was one of those that the government wished to proscribe (*Journal de Paris*, 5 vendémiaire an IV, p.2), and the royalist plotters certainly counted on his help (E. d'Antraigues, *Corps législatif. Conseil des cinq cents. Pièces trouvées à Venise*). Just before the troubles broke out, *La Quotidienne* (10 vendémiaire an IV, p.4) published this not very clear note: 'A la Butte des Moulins, le président et le secrétaire ont eu peur: des hommes plus courageux ont pris leur place: Laharpe a été nommé secrétaire dans la section du Théâtre-français, qui est toujours restée fidèle à ses principes'. A mistake was made in naming the wrong section, but it was corrected in the following day's issue of the same paper (p.4).

[1] the copy which is reproduced here was sent by Charles Frérot d'Abancour,—who was interceding with the authorities on La Harpe's behalf, to Charles Cochon de Lapparent, Minister of police, on 27 messidor an IV (Archives nationales F[7]7151).

[2] the Minister of justice submitted a report on La Harpe to the Directoire on 9 July 1796 (21 messidor an IV), but no decision was taken (Debidour, iii.44). In hiding, La Harpe experienced extreme poverty (see his letters to the *Journal de Paris*, 22 and 29 germinal an IV, pp.807, 835-836), and started pestering the authorities for the suppression of the warrant against him from April 1796 on. He was finally acquitted by the Jury d'Accusation du Département de la Seine in the middle of November 1796 (*La Quotidienne*, 29 brumaire an V, p.4).

[3] this must be a copyist's gloss.

[4] on 7 January 1796 (17 nivôse an IV), a treasury official called Méat and a certain mme Minut were arrested and accused of being in touch with La Harpe (Archives nationales, F[1]7130). In his will (Minutier central: Etude LXXIII[xx] 1176, 13 pluviôse an XI), La Harpe left mme Minut 6000 francs: 'Madame de Minut, Polonaise, née

Danieska, demeurant à Paris, m'a donné de grandes marques d'attachement dans les divers dangers que j'ai couru pendant la révolution; elle a exposé sa vie pour sauver mes jours'. After his divorce from his wife in 1793, La Harpe would appear to have had his meals with monsieur and madame Minut (see the report made on him at the time of his arrest in 1794, Archives nationales, $F^7$4759).

[5] the Decrees of 5 and 13 fructidor an III. See La Harpe's *Oui ou non* and *Le Salut public*.

[6] 'Les électeurs qui se sont réunis dans la salle du Théâtre français, n'y ont pris aucune délibération; ils ont attendu toute la journée les électeurs de la majorité des sections: il ne s'y est rendu que ceux de 20 sections; cependant 30 assemblées primaires au moins avaient adhéré à cette réunion. Le bureau ne s'est même pas formé. Les électeurs se sont séparés vers 11 h' (*Courrier Universel*, 13 vendémiaire an IV, p.1).

[7] the proclamation to take up arms.

[8] 'Dans l'intérieur de l'assemblée de la Butte-des-Moulins, l'on y entend beaucoup de confusion' (Aulard, ii.292).

[9] however, he was at least an acquaintance, if not a close friend, of one of the most active members of this section, Richer de Sérizy (P. C. L. Baudin, 'Réponse à l'écrit du Citoyen La Harpé' *La Sentinelle*, 23 fructidor an III, pp.314-315).

[10] this has not come down to us.

[11] the section made a call for arms at 6 a.m., and by 7 a.m. had surrounded the Palais-royal (Aulard, ii.302).

71. *La Harpe to Henri Agasse*

[April 1797?][a]

J'ai passé chés M. Agasse à qui j'avais eu l'honneur d'écrire[1], il y a trois semaines, et qui ne m'a pas fait celui de me répondre. Je le prie instamment de me donner une réponse prochaine sur l'impression du Lycée et sur les autres objets de ma lettre.

LAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Archives de la ville de Reims, Collection Tarbé, carton XIX, 98).

TEXTUAL NOTE

[a] MS1 is dated in another hand 1789.

COMMENTARY

See letter 73. This letter could in fact date from 1797 or later. The first three volumes were with the printers by May 1797 (*Réfutation du livre de l'Esprit*, Paris, Migneret an V in-8vo, *Avant-propos*, p.i). La Harpe had planned to finish his lectures on 18th century philosophy by the Spring of 1798, and then have the whole of his literature course published (*Registre des Assemblées générales des fondateurs du Lycée* (Assemblée du 15 floréal an V, fol.119),

Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, MS 919), but had to flee after the *coup d'état* of 18 fructidor (4 September 1797). The first eight volumes of the *Lycée* did not appear until May 1799. La Harpe did not return to Paris until 15 January 1800 (*Registre des délibérations et arrêtés du Comité d'administration du Lycée*, séance du 27 nivôse an VIII, fol.33-34, Bibliothèque Historique de la Ville de Paris, MS 920).

[1] is this the letter dated 1797 which passed at the *Vente des lettres autographes provenant du Cabinet du Chevalier R. . .y, du lundi 30 novembre 1863*, in which La Harpe 's'élève contre l'opposition que met son éditeur à lui laisser publier dans une brochure séparée, un chapitre de son livre'? This could refer to the *Réfutation du livre de l'Esprit*. A whole series of letters from La Harpe to Agasse passed at this sale (no.285).

72. La Harpe to [?][1]

Paris, 25 avril [1800]

Messieurs,

Je ne lis point la *décade* et j'ignore par conséquent sur quelle autorité l'on y attribue à Racine les vers que vous joignés à votre lettre et qui sont devenus l'objet d'une discussion parmi vous[2]. Je n'ai presque point de livres sous ma main et ne peux même consulter les mémoires de Racine le fils ni les lettres de son père, où se trouvent quelques essais de jeunesse dans le même goût que le morceau dont il s'agit. Ce que je crois pouvoir vous assurer, c'est que tout cela pourrait être indifféramment de la plupart des versificateurs du même temps, surtout de ceux qui avaient le même âge que l'on suppose ici à Racine. Les *Juvenilia* dont je parle n'annonçaient en quoi que ce soit l'auteur d'*Andromaque*, pas même celui des *Frères Ennemis*. Mais son talent se déclara dans sa première pièce *imprimée*, *La Renommée aux Muses*. Quant aux vers en question, ce n'est autre chose qu'une de ces mille et une imitations des sonnets Italiens, alors fort en vogue, et qui en ont produit tant de mauvais dans notre langue: c'est cette galanterie alembiquée, où l'on cherche du sentiment à force d'esprit, ce qui est un moyen sûr de manquer l'un et l'autre. Tout ce que l'on peut remarquer

dans ces vers c'est qu'ils ne manquent pas de nombre et qu'il y en a deux ou trois d'assés bons:

> Je me sentis esclave et je me crus heureux.
> Ainsi je fis d'aimer, l'heureux apprentissage,

Ce dernier est d'une tournure élégante, surtout pour la forme, mais on en trouverait beaucoup de pareils semés dans Malleville et autres rimeurs contemporains qui n'ont jamais été au-dessus du médiocre. Il est d'ailleurs assés commun que les poëtes les plus célèbres n'ayent rien eu de précoce. Voltaire lui-même, venu après tous les modèles du grand siècle, n'a été prématuré que dans quelques poésies légères, et point du tout dans le genre noble, toujours beaucoup plus difficile. Quand il fit de beaux vers dans la Henriade et dans Oedipe il avait à peu près vingt ans.

veuillés, Messieurs, excuser le retard de ma réponse et me croire votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur.

LAHARPE

P.S. les 5 nouveaux volumes du Lycée paraîtront dans quelques mois. On finit le onzième[3].

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Bibliothèque Municipale, Châteauroux, MS42 (II, 3).

COMMENTARY

[1] it is difficult to say to which literary society this was written.

[2] *Stances à Parthénisse*, published by a certain Dumas-Denugan in the *Décade Philosophique*, 10 thermidor an VII, xxii.233-234. In his accompanying letter (pp.232-233), Dumas-Denugan writes: 'Elles ont été copiées sur un manuscrit très rare, et furent insérées dans le Journal général de France [le 2 octobre 1788]'.

[3] the first eight volumes (tomes I-VII) had been published in May 1799 (*Journal typographique &c.*, 5 prairial an VII, ii.249-250). Three, and not five, volumes (tomes VIII-X) were now published at the beginning of August 1800 (*ibid.*, 15 thermidor an VIII, iii.337-338). A further three volumes (tomes XI-XII) appeared in the middle of July 1801 (*ibid.*, 25 messidor an IX, iv.306). The remaining volumes were not published until after La Harpe's death.

73. La Harpe to Alexandre Louis Joseph Laborde

Paris 29 8bre 1801[a]

A votre retour, monsieur, je me suis présenté chés vous, et depuis j'ai toujours été souffrant et le suis encore[1]. Je prends le parti de vous exposer ici en peu de mots ma situation sur laquelle il m'a paru qu'on vous avait fort trompé.

Vous m'aviés fait l'honneur de me dire qu'on me payerait le courant, comme aux autres créanciers, et qu'on se libérerait de l'arriéré à mesure qu'il rentrerait des fonds. En conséquence, j'ai cru pouvoir compter sur un payement de 1200[tt] en octobre, comme me l'avait promis M. Cartron[2]. Il m'a dit ne pouvoir le faire, *attendu que j'avais reçu proportionnellement plus que les autres créanciers, ce qui paraissait d'autant moins juste qu'on savait que mes ouvrages me rapportaient beaucoup d'argent.* C'est d'abord sur ce dernier point que je me crois obligé de vous mettre au fait de la vérité, et cela ne sera pas difficile.

Je crois en effet que M. Agasse gagne beaucoup avec mon Lycée, lui-même n'en disconvient pas, et j'en suis bien aise pour lui, car c'est un honnête homme, et pour moi, car je suis auteur. Mais, monsieur, il gagnerait un million qu'il ne m'en reviendrait pas un écu. C'est un fait assés connu qu'il y a dix ans, dépouillé de tout par la Révolution, je vends à Panckoucke mon ouvrage en manuscrit devant former 12 volumes[3] pour *1800[tt] de rentes viagères.* Je devais d'abord en avoir le double, mais il était ruiné comme moi, et vous savés ce qu'était alors le commerce[4]. Agasse, en achetant le fonds de Panckoucke[5], est devenu acquéreur du contrat, et me paye 1800[tt] annuelles, et pas un sol de plus, parce qu'il ne me doit rien de plus. Voilà les faits, Monsieur, que tout le monde est à portée de vérifier. Je dois avouer à la louange du Libraire que tout à l'heure il est venu de lui-même offrir 600[tt] d'augmentation de ma rente annuelle, en sorte qu'elle sera désormais de 2400[tt][6], lesquelles avec les 3000[tt] que j'ai sur votre maison[7]

font tout mon avoir. Vous pouvés juger combien je suis à l'étroit, si cela vient à me manquer, surtout si vous considérés que pendant trois ans de proscription où je n'avais aucune ressource, j'ai été obligé de tout vendre, hors mes livres dont je ne saurais me passer[8], obligé ensuite de racheter des meubles nécessaires, obligé enfin de contracter des dettes qui ne sont pas touttes acquittées, et qu'il faut rélever sur mon modique revenu[9]. Telle est, monsieur, ma position dont je ne me suis permis le détail que parce qu'il ne faut pas qu'on me croye riche et avide quand je suis pauvre et désintéressé. Car, d'ailleurs, je ne demande rien de plus que les autres. Je trouverais même fort bon qu'on me préfère ceux qui sont encore plus pauvres que moi, et dans tous les cas je ne me plaindrai jamais de rien. Je ne crois pas avoir reçu plus que les arrérages des deux dernières années, et j'en ai demandé le relevé à M. Cartron. Tout ce que je désire, c'est de savoir si je puis au moins compter toujours sur le courant, qui, comme vous voyés, est nécessaire à ma substance, ayant à nourrir une nièce pauvre[10], et un domestique[11] attaché à moi depuis 15 ans avec sa femme et ses enfans, qui m'a suivi dans ma proscription et que je ne saurais abandonner.

Vous connaissés depuis longtemps, monsieur, tous les sentimens avec lesquels je suis et serai toujours votre très humble et très obéissant serviteur,

DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Delaborde / de Méréville

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Bodleian library, Oxford, MS 25438, f.204).

TEXTUAL NOTES

[a] MS1 is endorsed by La Harpe: 'Paris 7 Brumaire an 10e / Delaharpe (Mr)'.

COMMENTARY

Jean Joseph de Laborde settled two annuities on La Harpe; first, one for 1500 livres on 9 March 1787, and then another for 1520 livres on 19 January 1791 (Minutier Central: Etude XLVIII[xx] 313, 344).

[1] his illness is first announced in the *Journal de Paris* on 16 May 1801 (26 floréal an X, p.1424), and he continued to be ill throughout the year. He was unable to complete a speech that he had hoped to give at the opening of the Lycée on 22 November 1801 (*Registre des délibérations et arrêtés du Comité d'administration*, séance du

23 brumaire an X, fol.55; Bibliothèque historique de la ville de Paris, MS 920). He was never to enjoy good health again.

[2] La Harpe would continue to pester Cartrond. See the letter of 16 prairial an X which passed at the Charon sale of 14 May 1845, p.27, no.185, and another of 5 nivôse an XI which passed at the Charon sales of 3 February 1845, p.42, no.216, and 22 March 1847, p.25, no.227.

[3] some details of this treaty can be got from the description of a court case in March 1822 when Agasse's inheritors defended their rights on the work (*Journal général de l'Imprimerie*, 3 August 1822, pp.478-479).

[4] Panckoucke originally settled 3600 livres on m. and mme de La Harpe on 12 March 1792 (Minutier Central: Etude LXXXIII^{xx}661), but this was reduced to 1800 livres on 18 June 1792 (the receipt is collated with the constitution).

[5] on 6 pluviôse an II (25 January 1794) (Minutier Central: Etude LXXXIII^{xx}673).

[6] see letter 76.

[7] in the rue d'Artois (rue Laffitte).

[8] for the contents of his library at the time of his death see the *Catalogue des livres de feu M. J. F. de La Harpe . . . dont la vente se fera le lundi 1° messidor an XI*, Bibliothèque nationale: Δ 12809).

[9] apart from his annuities, his only regular sources of income were his royalties on his plays and his fees at the Lycée. For the session 1800-1801, for instance, his teaching brought him 2400 francs (*Registre des délibérations*, séance du 27 prairial an IX, fol.51).

[10] madame veuve François Betrand, *née* Magdeleine Cretin, the daughter of La Harpe's sister, Thérèse, and a glazier (Inventory of La Harpe's effects, Minutier Central: Etude LXXIII^{xx}1177, 17 ventôse an XI).

[11] he is named in La Harpe's will as Dupuis (Minutier Central: Etude LXXIII^{xx}1176, 13 pluviôse an XI).

74. La Harpe to Louis Nicolas Pierre Joseph Dubois, préfet de police

Corbeil, 25 juillet [1802]

Recevés, monsieur, mes justes remerciemens de l'intérêt que vous avés bien voulu prendre, sans me connaître, à la situation fâcheuse où je suis. Sans doute, il est instant que je sois le plutôt possible à portée des secours de l'art qui me manquent ici, et je crois aussi que le sous-préfet de Corbeil, homme fort honnête, ne doute pas non plus que moi de l'Autorisation que vous attestés. Mais sans s'opposer à mon départ, il est en droit de me dire comme municipal qu'il ne connait que les ordres du ministre, et je n'ai point de réponse à cela. Je préfère donc en cette situation, comme

en toutes autres, de me tenir strictement dans les règles, et d'autant plus si le ministre de la police veut bien, comme il l'a promis, en dire un mot mardi au consul, l'expédition qu'il peut vous remettre, Monsieur, m'arrivera le lendemain, et c'est une nouvelle obligation que je vous aurai, et que je serai charmé de vous avoir.

Agréés, Monsieur, les témoignages de mon respect et de ma reconnaissance.

DELAHARPE

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Archives nationales, $F^7$6311).

COMMENTARY

La Harpe was ordered out of Paris on 25 February 1802, and he left the next morning for Châtillon-Coligny (see Archives nationales, $F^7$6311 for all the documents on this affair). The reasons for this were given in an official communiqué published in the *Moniteur* on 1 March 1802 (10 ventôse an X, p.639). He was allowed to move back to his former refuge in the rue de la Déguide (rue du 14 Juillet) in Corbeil on 27 March 1802. Fouché now went to see Bonaparte about La Harpe on 27 July 1802, and La Harpe was allowed to return to Paris for medical care.

75. La Harpe to Joseph Fouché, minister of police

Citoyen Ministre,

Sur l'assurance réitérée de votre part, que je pouvais revenir à Paris sans attendre une permission par écrit, je suis venu hier au soir me remettre entre les mains de mon médecin, et je crois de mon devoir de vous en donner avis sur le champ, et de vous remercier des égards que vous avés bien voulu avoir pour mon état, et pour les secours qu'il exigeait.

Agréés mes très humbles respects,

DELAHARPE

Paris, jeudi 29 [juillet 1802]

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Archives nationales, $F^7$6311).

COMMENTARY

A police report on La Harpe on 15 September 1802 says 'L'état de santé ne lui permet pas de jouir de la société chez lui, ni chez les autres' (Archives nationales, $F^7$6311).

76. La Harpe to Henri Agasse

mardi [1802?][a]

En arrivant ici[1], monsieur, je me trouve au dépourvu, faute d'un payement sur lequel j'avais compté et qu'on remet indéfiniment. Vous m'aviés très obligemment offert en dernier lieu quelques avances que je n'ai pas cru devoir accepter, comptant sur ces 12 cent[ll] qui m'auraient suffi pour le présent, et sachant d'ailleurs que vous êtes vous même quelquefois gêné. Mais en ce moment vous me rendrés un vrai service en m'envoyant 25 louis sans quoi je ne puis parer aux dépenses les plus urgentes.

Me voici à demeure à Paris, et nous terminerons quand vous voudrés notre acte nouveau chés M. Boulard[2]. Je ne saurais vous dire combien je suis touché de la noblesse de vos procédés et vous savez d'ailleurs quels sont pour vous mes sentimens d'estime et d'amitié,

DELAHARPE

[*address:*] A Monsieur, / Monsieur Agasse

MANUSCRIPTS

Holograph (Institut de France, MS 2717).

COMMENTARY

[a] see letter 73; this letter is difficult to date. I could have been written at any time from 1800 onwards; another of La Harpe's publishers, Mathieu Migneret, would help him by buying his manuscripts for 2,400 livres on 1 December 1802 (Inventory of La Harpe's effects (cote no. 3), Minutier central: Etude LXXIII[xx]1177: 17 ventôse an XI).

[1] he could be returning from Corbeil in January 1800 or July 1802, from one of his many trips to Clichy-La Garenne where he visited mme Récamier, or from a trip to a doctor's in December 1802 (see the letter from La Harpe published by Alexandre Jovicevich, *Correspondance de J. F. de La Harpe*, p.145).

[2] Agasse finally settled a further annuity of 600 francs on La Harpe on 14 January 1803 (24 nivôse an XI) (Minutier central: Etude LXXIII[xx]1176).

APPENDIX I

This is printed from the minutes in the hand of Delaporte (Comédie française) of a meeting concerning La Harpe's argument with the actors over his rights in *Coriolan* (see letter 61).

Délibération concernant M. de la Harpe.

Me Préville: Qu'on lui remette ce qu'il lui revient contre le droit de l'usage, mais qu'il recevra comme dédommagement de ce qu'il a donné aux Pauvres.

Mlle Dugazon: Qu'on lui donne ce qu'il demande puisqu'il n'y a point d'écrit.

Me Vestris: Qu'on le paye. Id.

Mlle La Chassaigne: Qu'on lui donne les droits de la plus forte recette, pour le dédommager de ce qu'il a donné aux Pauvres.

M. Des Essarts: Donner à M. de la Harpe ce qu'il réclame contre le droit de l'usage, et que la Comédie demandera aux Supérieurs que cet usage soit constaté dans le Règlement.

M. Dugazon: Qu'on le paye, et que l'on n'ait plus rien dorénavant de commun avec lui.

M. Delarive: Que l'on consulte les Registres, et que, s'il y a des exemples de l'usage en question, il ne soit point payé.

Me Suin: Que l'on rassemble les titres que l'on peut avoir, pour assembler ensuite le Conseil.

Mlle Raucourt: Comme M. Delarive.

M. Dazincourt: Comme M. Delarive. Mais que l'on écrive à M. de la Harpe pour justifier la conduite de M. Florence et qu'on lui rappelle ce qu'il a fait relativement à Jeanne de Naples.

M. Vanhove: Comme Mrs Delarive et Dazincourt.

M. Bellemont: Id.

M. Courville: Qu'on le paye.

M. Dorival: Comme M. Delarive et M. Dazincourt.

Mlle Olivier: Id.

Mlle Joly: Id

M. St. Prix: Id.
M. St. Phal: Id.
M. Florence: Id.

Fait à l'assemblée du 17 mai 1784, Bellemont 1[er] semainier.

APPENDIX II

These minutes, again in the hand of Delaporte (Comédie française) have been published in the *Revue retrospective* (Paris 1837) 2s.x.303-304. It is difficult to see what crime La Harpe had committed. Mme Vestris had written to Jacques Denis Antoine from Lyons on 22 August 1784 (Bibliothèque nationale, n.a.fr.3035, f.91) 'j'ai joué en Jeanne de Naples qui étoit tombée il y avoit 18 mois par la manière dont elle fut jouée, et je puis dire sans l'effet que j'y ai fait; on a redemandé la pièce et je l'ai rejouée. Il y avoit un monde énorme! Mais le premier acte ne fait point d'effet et n'en fera jamais tel qu'il est, il ne sert qu'à fatiguer beaucoup l'actrice inutillement. A mon retour, je tourmenterai tellement Mr de la Harpe que J'espère qu'il se rendra à mes raisons et qu'il le changera; je le désire d'autant plus que je voudrois jouer le rôle cet hyver à la cour et, s'il le fait, je suis sûr qu'à la venue ce sera un des Rôles que l'on prendra toujours pour débuter. Mais je veux luy parler avant qu'il le retouche.' The play was not performed in 1784, nor now in 1786. It would not be staged again until 26 April 1788.

20 mars 1786 M. de la Harpe ayant eu un tort grave avec la Comédie, elle a délibéré si elle remettrait sa pièce de Jeanne de Naples.

Me Bellecour: On a joué M. Palissot; on peut jouer M. de la Harpe.

M. Préville: Je ne connais pas l'affaire, mais si la Comédie est insultée, on ne doit pas traiter avec lui.

M. Brizard: Non.

M. Molé: Jouer sa pièce

Me Vestris: Se soumet à ce que décidera M. de Villequier. Par estime pour mes camarades et par attachement pour mon ami, j'estime que l'évènement est une méprise et je pense qu'on ne doit pas priver le public et un auteur du fruit de ses ouvrages.

Mlle La Chassaigne: Qu'il est dangereux d'avoir des affaires d'intérêt avec M. de la Harpe.

M. Des Essarts: Non. Et qu'on se retire par devers M. de Villequier pour éclaircir l'affaire de M. de La Harpe.

M. Dazincourt: Pour la Cour, pour la Ville et pour l'avenir, ce qu'on voudra.

M. Fleury: Non.

M. Bellemont: Point de commerce avec lui, s'il a des torts.

M. Florence: A trouvé un matin M. de la Harpe si brave garçon, si honnête et si plein d'honneur, qu'il demande qu'on joue sa pièce le plutôt possible.

M. Courville: Qu'on expose à M. de Villequier les torts de M. de La Harpe et qu'il prononce là-dessus.

M. Dorival: Non, et je ne jouerai point dans ses pièces.

Mlle Thénard: Ce qu'on voudra.

Mlle Olivier: Ce qu'on voudra.

Mlle Vanhove: Comme on voudra.

Mlle Laurent: Comme on voudra.

Mlle Candeille: Comme on voudra.

Me Suin: Ce qu'on voudra.

APPENDIX III

Changes in Virginie

The archives of the Comédie française contain changes and additions for act III, scenes 5 to 7, act IV, scenes 4 to 6, and two versions of act V, scene 4 (see letter 63). The changes in acts III and IV only differ slightly from the final printed version of the play, but show how La Harpe re-worked the text. The changes in act V are particularly interesting in that in them we see La Harpe looking for a satisfactory ending. In 1793, La Harpe will make further changes in act III, scenes 1 and 2, and publish them in the *Mercure français* on 1 June 1793 (pp.195-201). Not all of them appear in the final version. In these changes, for instance, Icilius ends act III scene 1 with the following lines:

Mais c'est en risquant tout que l'on peut tout sauver,
Nature, hymen, amour, ô droits sacrés de l'homme!
O sainte Liberté, divinité de Rome!
Vous remplissez ce cœur, incapable d'effroi,
Et je sais qu'Appius peut trembler devant moi.

Acte III, scènes 5 à 7:

Coupures.

fin de la scène 5ème. [Plautie:]

Il faut auparavant m'immoler dans ses bras.

Coupés les huit vers suivans, et continués ainsi:

Appius *seul.*

Je sens à tout moment dans cette âme ulcérée, &c.

jusqu'à ce vers de la scène suivante: [Spurius:]

Que chaque instant amasse et grossit sur sa tête.

Coupés tout ce qui suit jusqu'à ce vers:

Et s'avouant trompé ne s'obstinera pas . . .

Substitués:

Le péril est pressant: ne vous obstinés pas . . .

Appius.

Après ce que j'ai fait &c.

Acte IV, scènes 4 à 6 [numbered 5 to 7 in the manuscript.]
[Icilius:]

Furieux, implacable et sûr de sa puissance,
Appius hautement annonce la vengeance,
Respire les forfaits et s'apprête à ravir
Le fruit . . . . .

Scène 6ème.

Les acteurs précédens, le Chef des Licteurs, *Deux licteurs dans le fond.*

Le Chef des Licteurs.

J'apporte ici l'ordre du Décemvir.
Les loix arment sa main pour confondre l'audace
Dès qu'au jour renaissant la nuit aura fait place,
Devant son tribunal il cite Icilius,
Virginie et sa mère, et vous Virginius.
Songés que désormais la désobéissance
Ne peut impunément défier sa puissance.
Si l'on osait encor méconnaître ses droits,
La force peut dompter ceux qui bravent les Loix.

Il sort.

Plautie.

Quoi! devant ce tyran que la vertu redoute,

A ce vil Tribunal! . .
Virginius.
J'irai, j'irai sans doute:
Je vous y conduirai. &c.

Acte 4ème scène 7ème.

après ces vers: [Virginius:]

Et je saurai du moins avant que de mourir
Ce que Rome aujourd'hui peut permettre et souffrir.

ajoutés: Icilius.

Et qu'en attendés vous? qu'esperés vous dans Rome?
Son génie abattu tremble devant un homme.
La guerre en ce moment ne laisse en ses remparts
Qu'un peuple désarmé de femmes, de vieillards, &c. &c.

[The rest of this speech and the speech by Virginius that follows it, and which have both been added here, are, apart from a few minor words, as printed.]

Acte V, scène 4 [Version 1]

après ce vers: [Valérius:]

Sa mort va l'expier: notre armée est aux portes;
Vos vengeurs sont tout prêts.

lisés ainsi la fin de la pièce. Appius.

Oui, Sénat, tu l'emportes.
Sur mon pouvoir détruit le tien va s'élever:
Je sais quel traitement tu crois me reserver.
Mais quand j'ai tout perdu, l'Empire et Virginie,
Tu n'auras pas le droit d'ordonner de ma vie.
Appius sait mourir.

Il se frappe d'un poignard. Les licteurs l'emmènent hors du théâtre.

Valérius.

Le monstre s'est puni.
D'un trop doux châtiment son forfait est suivi.
A la rigueur des Loix qu'on livre son complice,
De ce vil Claudius préparés le supplice,
Que du Décemvirat le nom même aboli
Dans l'opprobre à jamais demeure enseveli.
Virginius.
Ah! lorsque par mes mains mon malheur se consomme,
Qui me payera ce sang?
Valérius.
La liberté de Rome.

Acte v scène 4 [Version 2]

Valérius, *suivi du Sénat*

Arrêtés: respectés les décrets du Sénat:
Il déclare Appius ennemi de l'Etat.
Notre armée en ces murs vient vous faire justice.
Vos vengeurs sont tout prêts: que le tyran frémisse.
Déjà les légions entrent dans nos remparts,
Et vous appellent tous près de leurs étendards.
Soldats, séparés vous d'un injuste puissance,
Obéissés aux loix, redoutés leur vengeance.

Les soldats se rangent du côté de Valérius.

Licteurs, traînés ce monstre à la mort destiné
Appius.
Je vois quel sort m'attend: j'ai vécu, j'ai régné.

Montrant Virginius.

Je n'ai plus rien à perdre . . . et voilà mon supplice.

Valérius, *aux Licteurs.*

Allés, suivés ses pas, enchaînés son complice,
Le lâche Clodius. Rome a repris ses droits:
Rome va les frapper par le glaive des loix.
Appius doit périr, mais de la mort des traîtres,
Mais par le châtiment qu'ont prescrit nos ancêtres.
Que du Décemvirat le nom même aboli
Dans l'opprobre à jamais demeure enseveli. &c.

APPENDIX IV

This fragment has been preserved in the archives of the Comédie française without any indication as to its source. The reference is to Charles Francis Sheridan's *A History of the late revolution in Sweden* (London 1778), translated into French by Jean Marie Bruyset in 1783. This note is possibly for a lecture at the Lycée, where La Harpe did mention Voltaire's comments on the subject (*Lycée*, x.424-425). In any case, it appears to date from the late or post-revolutionary period. What La Harpe had so say on kingship at this time contrasted a little with what he had advocated in earlier years. In a speech at the Lycée in December 1788, he had reduced royal authority to 'le pouvoir donné par la Loi de veiller à l'observation de la Loi' (*Mercure de France*, 10 March 1792, pp.49-53). Apart from apparent republican fervour during the Terror, when he likened kingship to sorcery (*Mercure français*, 30 March 1793, p.220), his general belief in Constitutional Monarchy remained unaltered. He was to continue to deny any connection with dyed in the wool monarchists (*Du fanatisme dans la langue révolutionnaire; Œuvres*, v.632). Nevertheless whereas he had, like many others, believed in the ability of the legislators of 1789 and 1790 to find a suitable balance between royal and parliamentary authority, after 1794 he began to preach a belief in a natural order where the king's authority was powerful, if not absolute. He became a declared enemy of the arrangements made for executive power in 1795 (see letter 70), and was already highly critical of the law-givers: 'Et cinq cents despotes ne sont-ils pas cinq cents fois pires qu'un seul' (*Le Salut public*; *Œuvres*, v.454).

In his *Philosophie au XVIIIe siècle*, he was to condemn openly what he had earlier said on the subject: 'J'opposais une chimère de perfection que je croyais possible à un bien dont je n'appercevais pas l'imperfection nécessaire' (*Lycée*, xv.61).

pour mémoire

J'ouvre le livre de Shéridan sur la dernière Révolution de Suède (en 1772). L'introduction est un résumé fort judicieux sur les différentes causes de l'établissement du pouvoir absolu dans presque tous les Etats de l'Europe. L'examen de ces causes ne sert qu'à lui inspirer plus d'étonnement sur ce qui s'est passé en Suède, et après avoir exprimé sa surprise de toutes les manières possibles, tout à coup et sans aucune préparation, sans aucune transition, il nous dit: 'quoique l'autorité royale en Suède eût certainement été trop limitée dans le principe par la faction du gouvernement qui s'y établit en 1720, cependant par un vice frappant dans cette forme, le roi n'avait aucun moyen constitutionnel pour conserver le pouvoir qu'on lui accordait. Ainsi, par l'effet des changemens et des innovations qui s'introduisirent dans la suite, le pouvoir des rois de Suède fut presque réduit à rien.' Je dirais à Shéridan: d'après ce que vous venés d'avouer vous même, c'est moi qui m'étonne de votre étonnement, et c'est vous qui sans vous en appercevoir, mettés le doigt sur ce que vous cherchés. Quoi! vous ne comprenés pas que tout ce qui est forcé et contre nature ne saurait durer. Ce qui me surprend moi, c'est qu'un pareil état de choses ait duré 50 ans. Assurément, il ne faut pas qu'un roi constitutionnel soit absolu, mais il faut qu'il ait un pouvoir réel, puisque l'action de ce pouvoir est vraiment nécessaire; et loin de jouir du pouvoir il est de fait que le roi de Suède ne jouissait pas même de la liberté qu'avait le dernier de ses sujets. Ne voyez vous pas que ce contresens monstrueux avait nécessairement des effets qui se faisaient sentir aux sujets comme au prince, et que s'il a réussi sans peine à l'affranchir et à reprendre une autorité légitime, c'est qu'on en était au point où le mal était sensible pour tout le monde comme pour lui, que le ressort qui la comprimait s'est brisé de lui même, parce qu'il était très tendu, et que Gustave n'a fait que remettre les choses dans leur état naturel. Ce qui n'a rien d'extraordinaire ni de difficile.

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[The numbers given are those of the letters, in roman when written by La Harpe, in italics when addressed to him.]

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Manon Lescaut:
classical, romantic, or rococo?

by Patrick Brady

Previous assessments

Although it is the formal perfection of *Manon Lescaut* that appears chiefly to attract the admiration of the critics, it is not this aspect of the work that chiefly occupies their attention. They have interested themselves principally in the philosophical meaning (is it a Jansenist novel?), in its possible autobiographical implications (can Manon Lescaut be identified with Prévost's mistress Lenki Eckhardt?), in its literary sources (Penelope Aubin, Robert Challes), in its realism as a novel of manners (how accurate is the importance given to the rôle played by money?).

Manon Lescaut is probably most commonly classed as a Romantic masterpiece in a classical framework, and this formula has been re-affirmed as recently as 1960[1]. However, *Manon* has also recently been described as an example of 'style Régence'[2], and as 'une grande œuvre rococo'[3], while none of these critics attempts to explain how this one small novel can be classical, *régence*, Rococo, and Romantic all at the same time.

Mme Engel writes as follows: 'Atmosphère de liberté et aussi d'élégance. Le style Régence est caractérisé par sa préoccupation de grâce sobre, simple, bien différente de la surcharge du style

[1] C. E. Engel, 'L'abbé Prévost, romancier baroque', *Revue des sciences humaines*, pp.385 *et seq.*

[2] *idem*, *Le Véritable abbé Prévost* (Monaco 1957), p.162.

[3] R. Laufer, *Style rococo, style des 'lumières'* (Paris 1963), ch.iii.

rocaille qui lui succédera. Cette sobriété et ce raffinement se retrouvent dans le roman. Manon a une soif éperdue de mouvement, et aussi d'élégance. L'argent ne l'attire que par le plaisir et les toilettes qu'il peut lui procurer. Prévost insiste sur la grâce, la distinction de la jeune femme et même sur celle de la petite courtisane qu'elle envoie un soir tenir compagnie à Des Grieux, alors qu'elle l'abandonne.... Dans *Manon*, la distinction et l'élégance, sans trace de mièvrerie, sont une loi impérieuse.' Thus the classification of the novel as *Régence* is apparently based on the psychology and appearance of the heroïne.

Professor Laufer's point of view is more complex and more personal: 'Le genre des mémoires intérieurs échappe ici à ses limitations: c'est un récit à la première personne et un plaidoyer que nous fait Des Grieux, ce qui a pour effet de décentrer l'histoire de Des Grieux et d'y substituer indirectement celle de Des Grieux et de Manon. Ce décentrage et la mise en question qui en résulte sont caractéristiques du style et de la pensée rococo. . . . Comme l'Homme de Qualité, le lecteur est confronté par une histoire dont il lui appartient de découvrir par lui-même le sens et l'importance. Cette mise en question multiple, — des héros, du lecteur, et de l'amour, — sur la base des contradictions sociales est la marque d'une grande œuvre rococo.'

In order to ascertain whether or not these two positions are irreconcilable, we must first examine the terms used, and then their application. Mme Engel, by making rocaille exaggeration immediately follow the *régence* style, seems to deny the very existence of the rococo, of which these were actually the first and last stages. In point of fact, the rococo was the dominant style of the first half of the 18th century[4]. The initial stage (*régence*) was based on the arabesque, which in the full flowering of the rococo gave way to the cartouche. (Professor Laufer seems to disagree with mme Engel when he calls *Manon* rococo—but actually his concept of rococo is based not on the cartouche but on the arabesque, so that

[4] P. Brady, 'Rococo and Neo-classicism', *Studi francesi* (1964).

he really means *régence*.) However, mme Engel is right in saying that this novel is distinguished by the combination of 'sobriété' and 'raffinement' which characterise the *régence* style; but is this true of the character Manon? The young woman may be granted 'distinction' (à la rigueur), but hardly 'sobriété'! And while Manon herself may be 'sans trace de mièvrerie', this is perhaps less accurately said of the novel as a whole, especially of Des Grieux's expressions of love. Thus the 'sobriété' comes from the structure, the 'raffinement' from Des Grieux's stubtle reasonings, the 'élégance' from Manon's tasteful dressing, and a 'trace de mièvrerie' from Des Grieux's manner of expressing his love. This examination of mme Engel's classification may leave us feeling somewhat confused; but the picture is not made very much clearer by Roger Laufer. This critic avoids getting lost in details by taking a very broad view, based chiefly on the psychology of the two protagonists. Having established with really exceptional insight the 'base de contradictions sociales', he concludes that there is a 'mise en question idéologique', accompanied by a 'décentrage de l'histoire', which make the work rococo (*régence*)—none of which assertions is substantiated.

External indications

Comments made by other writers, especially if contemporary, together with a consideration of other works of the same author, help to classify the novel under discussion.

Le Pour et contre published in 1733 (ii.344-348) an article criticizing Marivaux's *Vie de Marianne*, and then in 1734 (iii.137-139) one praising *Manon Lescaut*. It was long thought that both these articles had been written by Prévost, who did in fact direct this journal; but it has now been established that the first is by Desfontaines[5] and the second by Camusat or some other

[5] see F. Deloffre, *Marivaux: La Vie de Marianne* (Paris 1957), pp.lxvii-lxviii.

collaborator of the *Lettres sérieuses et badines*[6], which reduces their interest considerably.

It is worthwhile, on the other hand, to record that on 28 July 1733 Voltaire is moved by the 'tendre et passionné autheur de Manon Lescaut' (Best.619); and to note Montesquieu's admiration for the work. He writes in his *Pensées*: 'J'ai lu, ce 6 avril 1734, *Manon Lescaut*, roman composé par le père Prévost. Je ne suis pas étonné que ce roman, dont le héros est un fripon, et l'héroïne une catin qui est menée à la Salpêtrière, plaise; parce que toutes les mauvaises actions du héros, le chevalier des Grieux, ont pour motif l'amour, qui est toujours un motif noble, quoique la conduite soit basse. Manon aime aussi, ce qui lui fait pardonner le reste de son caractère.'

With regard to the general character of Prévost's works, the classicism of *Manon Lescaut* appears quite remarkable when we consider Prévost's other novels. Mme Engel points out their baroque flavour—the disturbing mixture of the sacred and the profane; the abuse of sinister, illogical dreams full of memories and morbid fancies; the melodrama and dark ecstasies, the obsession with death and funeral pomp. And Penelope Aubin, from whom Prévost apparently borrowed much of *Manon*, is classed as a follower of late 17th-century baroque. But Manon is considered an exception: mme Engel, as we have already mentioned, says that it is not a baroque work but 'un chef-d'œuvre romantique dans un cadre classique'. Prévost's translations, or rather adaptations, of Richardson's novels, which contributed so much to their success on the continent, reveal a similar classical bent in their insistence on pruning.

There are a number of autobiographical elements in *Manon Lescaut*, but the heroïne does not seem to have been a *portrait* of Lenki Eckhardt so much as a prefiguration of her—she entered his life, it seems, *after* the writing of this novel[7].

[6] see M. R. Labriolle-Rutherford, 'Le Pour et le Contre et les romans de l'abbé Prévost', *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* (janvier-mars 1962), p.28, note 2.

[7] a similar prefiguration seems to

Style

The general impression is one of fluid movement, neutral colouring, and elevated tone and phrasing. A closer look, however reveals not only variety within this general impression but almost contradiction, as for instance in the tendencies of the vocabulary.

In *Manon Lescaut* the vocabulary, the element which forms the texture of a work of literature, has two main tendencies, which seem exactly contrary to one another: one is material and especially financial realism, the other is sentimental and melodramatic hyperbole. This, of course, reflects the intrusion of bourgeois values into literature at this period—not only in the presence of so many words concerned with money, but in their not being considered incongruous when used side by side with high-flown sentiments in a story of genuine tragedy. The frequency of money terms may be illustrated by the fact that the ten words *argent*, *pistoles*, *bourse*, *richesses*, *francs*, *somme*, *louis*, *livres*, *écus*, and *comptant* between them occur some hundred times in the course of the story[8]. The exaggeration is both quantitative (*tant* and *trop*, *tout* and *rien*, *jamais* and *toujours*; *mille* and *ruisseaux* (*de larmes*), *infini* and *inépuisable*) and qualitative (nouns like *transport*, *anxiété*, *emportement*, *désespoir*, *folie*, *fureur*, *caresse*, *perfidie*, and others like *reine*, *princesse*, *tigre*; adjectives like *vif*, *aimable*, *passionné*, *inexprimable*, *incomparable*, *extraordinaire*, *immortel*, *touchant*, *triste*, *malheureux*, *volage*, *perfide*, *lâche*, *noir*, *horrible*, *terrible*, *effroyable*, *irréparable*, *barbare*, very often used with *si* or *plus*).

have occurred in the life and work of Hugo and Malraux; see G. Picon, *Malraux par lui-même* (Paris 1959), p.26.

[8] Laufer: 'argent (34 fois), somme (8), espèces (1), gratis (1), comptant (3), écus (3), francs (10), livres (7), louis (8), pistoles (14), bourse (14), caisse (1), coffre-fort (1), bien (2 en ce sens), richesses (11), fonds (1), trésors (1), récompense (4), paye (1), payement (1), payer (9 au sens propre), louer (4), perte (1), dépense (2), besoins (1 en ce sens), frais (2), gains (2), épargnes (1)'.

When we move from the level of vocabulary to that of style, the realism mostly evaporates. Apart from such colourful expressions as the assassin's 'il ira souper ce soir avec les anges' (ed. Garnier, p.125) there is little realism of language.

There is an unconvincing elegance in the words of the little prostitute ('J'ai une lettre à vous rendre . . . qui vous instruira du sujet qui m'amène, et par quel rapport j'ai l'avantage de connaître votre nom'; p.158), and the language of the deporting guards is scarcely more in keeping with their condition ('Nous en userons généreusement. Il ne vous en coûtera qu'un écu par heure pour entretenir celle de nos filles qui vous plaira le plus'; p.213). It is natural for Des Grieux, the narrator, not to possess a vulgar vocabulary; but this only means that the choice of this type of language, which determines much of the atmosphere of the work, takes place at the level of character and narrator—one does not eliminate the fact and choice of the language-type by providing explanations for it. At this level of style, the only colour allowed to relieve the neutrality of classicism is that provided by imagery ('Elle tremblait comme une feuille'; p.123), and even this is by no means always very concrete ('Je frémissais, comme il arrive lorsqu'on se trouve la nuit dans une campagne écartée: on se croit transporté dans un nouvel ordre de choses; on y est saisi d'une horreur secrète, dont on ne se remet qu'après avoir considéré longtemps tous les environs'; p.49).

The tendency towards hyperbole, however, is important at the level of style: one of the two fundamental manners employed to express love's ardour is full of preciosity, declamation, and hyperbolic clichés. Etiemble defends such expressions as *le plus malheureux de tous les hommes*, *le plus horrible de tous les récits*, *la plus volage et la plus perfide de toutes les créatures*, *la plus lâche de toutes les perfidies*, *la plus aimable de toutes les filles* on the grounds of *vraisemblance*, because of the youth and emotional temperament of the narrator. Laufer explains this tendency, with which we may no doubt also class such elements as the 'clef d'une grandeur effroyable' which is used to open Manon's prison door, by the

protagonist's taste for the theatrical, if not, indeed, the melodramatic.

A second style tendency is a complex one used in passages of moral and philosophical dissertation. This, like the preceding *précieux* style, has its roots in a main source of 17th century classicism—namely, in this case, the tradition of scholastic rhetoric. A fine example of this, which has been analysed by Etiemble, is to be found in the scene between Des Grieux and Tiberge at Saint-Lazare[9].

To these we must add a second form of expression of love, a lyrical sincerity whose violence is expressed in direct, unpretentious outbursts: 'Ah! Manon, Manon, il est bien tard de me donner des larmes, lorsque vous avez causé ma mort' (p.168). Such lyrical passages have the musical rythm of poetry, and a great

[9] Etiemble's preface to *Romanciers du XVIII[e] siècle* (Paris 1960), on the passage 'J'avoue, repris-je, qu'elle n'est pas juste . . . elles sont ici-bas nos plus parfaites félicités': 'Deux parties dans ce discours, dont chacune correspond à l'un des deux temps de l'argumentation. Dans la première, qui s'ouvre habilement sur "j'avoue", des Grieux répète que l'amour lui est joie, et tristesse la religion; dans la seconde, il explique à Tiberge comment les prédicateurs par conséquent devraient s'y prendre, afin de convertir à la morale chrétienne les amants de l'amour. Tout ce savant discours aboutit à "mais confessez". *J'avoue* (en n'avouant rien) *mais confessez*, vous, les curés, que les délices de l'amour sont ici-bas "nos plus parfaites félicités". Analysant d'un peu plus près encore ces deux parties, j'observe que la première enchaîne deux arguments, auxquels des Grieux feint que réponde son Mentor ("répondez-vous", "répondrez-vous encore"). Argument et réponse, ces deux ensembles ont même longueur. Une ligne de transition, et d'habileté oratoire, ouvre le second temps de ce discours élaboré: "Ne vous alarmez pas, ajoutai-je en voyant son zèle prêt à se chagriner". Là-dessus, deux arguments neufs, dont chacun équivaut à l'un des deux temps de la première partie: 1° notre félicité consiste dans le plaisir; 2° que les prédicateurs aient donc le tact d'en convenir. Plan si équilibré qu'il en faut chercher l'équivalent dans les discours de Corneille, si souvent distribués en éléments de 4, 8, 16, et 32 vers. A l'intérieur de ce cadre si bien ajusté qu'on ne le voit pas, une ingénieuse progression logique conduit du feint aveu *(j'avoue)* jusqu'au *mais confessez*; voyez la ruse: *j'ai eu dessein, je crois avoir fort bien prouvé, une différence qui m'est extrêmement avantageuse, ne vous alarmez pas, l'unique chose que je veux conclure, il est certain, je défie*; enfin, le *confessez*. Admirez en des Grieux le bon élève du séminaire, le très savant théoricien que fut aussi le père Prévost'.

simplicity of expression. This simplicity is shared by the narrative element, and the importance of the action gives this element a great importance in the total effect of the work—perhaps, indeed, a dominant importance.

Henri Roddier[10] has summed up the general traits of the style: 'Tout l'art consiste à découper [les phrases] en groupes relativement brefs, sans jamais, en principe, dépasser dix syllabes. Les alexandrins ou les groupes de quatorze syllabes peuvent toujours se scinder aisément en leur milieu, comme aussi la plupart des décasyllabes, règles qui conditionnent le plus souvent la fluidité de la prose classique. Ce rythme des propositions et expressions se complète d'une structure grammaticale très simple, où bien souvent les signes de ponctuation suffisent à marquer la rapide succession des événements ou des pensées. La légèreté du discours indirect, si fréquent, tient au seul fait que la conjonction *que* est toujours suivie de propositions aussi brèves que possible, supprimant ainsi toute impression de lourdeur.'

Ton conclude this section on style, let us point out that the preciosity of *Manon Lescaut*, which we have already mentioned and which is exemplified in such an expression as 'l'idole de mon cœur', used by both Manon (p.76) and Des Grieux (pp.117, 239), is not that 'préciosité nouvelle' to be found in Marivaux's *Vie de Marianne*: this subtle style of psychological analysis is hardly to be found between Montaigne and Marivaux, that is between mannerism and rococo, and is not present in *Manon*. It is true that we find in *Manon* certain passages where instead of portraying or imaging out the heights and depths of his emotions Des Grieux substitutes a passage merely saying that his feelings defied description or representation; and this in some ways resembles the use made by the rococo novelists, Marivaux, Crébillon, Duclos, of substitute passages, in a 'langue abstraite et gourmée', to replace erotic climaxes, as pointed out by Georges May[11]. The

[10] *L'abbé Prévost* (Paris 1955), p.110.

[11] G. May, *Le Dilemme du roman au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris 1963), p.67.

effect, however, is quite different, and the subtle erotic teasing of the rococo has nothing to do with the problem of description posed by feelings so deep as to be actually indescribable. There is nothing rococo about the style of *Manon Lescaut*.

The main characteristics are brevity, simplicity, clarity—these characteristics link this style with the classical tradition. This is not, however, the neo-classicism of the *style coupé* in *Candide*, with its jerky rhythm, nor the pseudo-classicism of *Zaïre* and *La Henriade*, with their hollow declamation. It preserves both the spirit and the letter of 17th-century classicism, although written in a later period and a later social, intellectual, and psychological climate, and may thus properly be termed post-classical.

Structure

Externally, the novel is constructed of two slightly unequal parts. The first part is characterised by four major catastrophes (the first destitution, the fire at Chaillot, the robbery by servants, and the demasking by G.M.), which reduce Des Grieux successively to a seminarist, a card-sharp, a complaisant lover, and a murderer. The first and third of these catastrophes provoke the betrayal of Des Grieux by Manon. The second part of the work is likewise marked by four chief catastrophes—the second demasking by G.M., exportation, the fight with Synnelet, and the death of Manon. During most of this part, Des Grieux is a convict, a desperado, or a fugitive.

This twofold external structure does not, however, reflect the internal structure of the work, and one critic's affirmation that 'la division commode en deux livres d'égale grosseur . . . marque deux étapes dans la vie de Des Grieux, celle des folles escapades et celle des actes criminels' is quite erroneous, as Des Grieux is already a murderer by the end of part one. It would perhaps be more accurate to say that the first part describes the descent into

hell, while the second gradually turns into the story of a very uneven return to sacrifice and redemption.

The internal structure, however, depends on the arrangement of the stages of development of the subject, and must be deduced from the pattern of what Tiberge sees as Des Grieux's sins against society and what Des Grieux sees as Manon's sins against love.

When we look at the work in this way, we find that three-quarters of the significant events take place in the first part: in the case of Des Grieux, there are his two elopements, two types of swindling, and two prison breaks (the first involving murder); in the case of Manon, there is her infidelity with B., her betrayal of Des Grieux to his family, and the presumably temporary abandonment of Des Grieux for G.M. In the last book, we find only Manon's presumably temporary abandonment of Des Grieux for G.M.'s son and Des Grieux's kidnapping of the latter and attempt to free Manon from the deporters. And no compensating elements bring the second part back to equal importance or effectiveness with the first—on the contrary. The conversations with Tiberge and the latter's remonstrations are all to be found in part one, where the faithful friend makes three noteworthy appearances in the story, each more significant than the preceding one. The latter part is further weakened by the eventual suppression of the realistic milieu, the last twenty and more pages taking place in a vague and unconvincing New World setting.

The novel has a classical simplicity of outline, leading directly from catastrophe to catastrophe (and finally to destruction, in the sense of the elimination of Manon). Poulet[12] speaks of 'l'instant-passage', Etiemble of 'progression par rebondissements, coups de théâtre'. This rigour and purity is a very important factor in the success of the work. The meandering digressions, or at least free movement, we might expect to find in a rococo work are noticeably absent from this novel.

[12] G. Poulet, *Etudes sur le temps humain* (Paris 1950), p.148.

Psychology

Des Grieux's sins against society have the intention and the effect of bringing him closer to Manon. Manon's sins against love have the opposite effect,—but not, of course, the opposite intention, for they are only sins against Des Grieux's conception of love, not against her own. This difference between their conceptions of love reflects 'le monde idéal du jeune homme de bonne famille (dotée d'une subtile vie intérieure) et le demi-monde bien réel (tout en extérieurs) de la jeune femme exploitée' (Laufer). She returns his gesture of abandoning family and prospects by her abandonment of the security and even luxury assured her by rich lovers. It is this blind acceptance of the necessity to sacrifice oneself for the other's ideal, however obscurely grasped, which brings them together. It must, however, be kept in mind that by far the greater part of this painful journey they make towards each other is left till the deportation episode towards the end of the novel.

Des Grieux has the same kind of excessive sensibility as Marivaux's Marianne: both are convinced that they possess a 'délicatesse innée' which sets them apart from the common run of mankind. (This vanity is not restricted to the psychological plane: Des Grieux speaks of 'la figure avantageuse que j'avais reçue de la Nature', and, like Marianne, is not modest about his hair: 'elle voulait que mes cheveux fussent accommodés de ses propres mains. Je les avais fort beaux'; p.143). In his narration, which is the very stuff of the work, language is constantly breaking down before the description of complex emotional states, and the reader is time and again left with a semi-articulate 'transport'—another instance, perhaps of this excessive sensibility.

Not only is action more important than reflection in this work; we often find Prévost writing as if he subscribed to the naturalist maxim that there is no such thing as psychology, or that it is only an aspect of physiology. At his first meeting with Manon, Des Grieux declares 'une douce chaleur se répandit dans toutes mes veines; j'étais dans une espèce de transport, qui m'ôta pour

quelque temps la liberté de la voix' (p.20). After his first inkling of Manon's infidelity with B.: 'Ma consternation fut si grande, que je versais des larmes en descendant l'escalier sans savoir encore de quel sentiment elles partaient' (p.27), and at supper afterwards 'Elle ne répondit que par quelques soupirs qui augmentèrent mon inquiétude. Je me levai en tremblant; je la conjurai, avec tous les empressements de l'amour, de me découvrir le sujet de ses pleurs; j'en versai moi-même en essuyant les siens; j'étais plus mort que vif' (p.30). When his father reveals Manon's treachery with B.: 'Je me levai de table, et je n'avais fait quatre pas pour sortir de la salle que je tombai sur le plancher sans sentiment et sans connaissance' (p.36). When the concierge of the Châtelet reveals to him that Manon has been condemned to deportation: 'Jamais apoplexie violente ne causa d'effet plus subit et plus terrible. Je tombai, avec une palpitation de cœur si douloureuse, qu'à l'instant que je perdis la connaissance, je me crus délivré de la vie pour toujours' (p.199).

Attention to physical details also appears in brief descriptions of quite unimportant gestures, another point of resemblance with *La Vie de Marianne*.

The exaltation of his temperament is compensated by a capacity for irony, which is expressed not only in the language, as when, lacking money, he goes off 'chercher quelque remède à cette fâcheuse espèce de maladie' (p.127), or when he remarks about Manon that 'elle ne pouvait espérer que G.M. la laissât, toute la nuit, comme une vestale' (p.176), but also in such a scene as that with old G.M., where he says 'Je trouvai l'occasion, en soupant, de lui raconter sa propre histoire et le mauvais sort qui le menaçait' (p.87).

There is a disturbing flexibility about several of the characters, especially the protagonists. This is reflected not only in Des Grieux's using his seminary training to express his passion (p.50) or to further it (p.18, 102-105) but also in the frequent deceptions practised. In part one alone, M. de B . . . tries to deceive Des Grieux's father (p.35), M. de T . . . deceives the people at the

Hôpital (p.134), Lescaut deceives Des Grieux (p.112), Manon deceives her servant (p.19), Des Grieux (p.27-30) and M. de B... (p.52-53), and Des Grieux, after deceiving Tiberge (p.23), Manon (p.27), his father (p.33), and Manon again (p.59), and having uttered a long monologue justifying swindling (ending with 'c'est un fond excellent de revenu pour les petits, que la sottise des riches et des grands'; p.60), is finally enrolled as a professional card-sharp—with the reflection: 'Quelque répugnance que j'eusse à tromper, je me laissai entraîner par une cruelle nécessité' (p.69). In point of fact, this repugnance is precisely what is extraordinarily lacking, as he goes on to show by deceiving the superior of Saint-Lazare twice (p.93 and 100), Tiberge (p.106), the superior twice again (p.106 and 110), a doorman at the Hôpital général (p.113), the coachman (p.123-124), and again Manon (p.128).

Another disturbing impression induces some doubt as to the genuine depth of Des Grieux's feelings. This is the constant impression of acting. The more external aspects of this element are provided by the taste for the theatre (p.42) and the opera (p.54), by the parody of lines from Racine's *Iphigénie* (p.154), by the scene with the Italian prince (p.144-145). More significant is the constant recourse to imagined effects on an imagined third party, a witness, to describe the degree of his (or Manon's) feelings, or rather the expressions of them: 'Nos postillons et nos hôtes nous regardaient avec admiration, et je remarquais qu'ils étaient surpris, etc.' (p.24); 'Un barbare aurait été attendri des témoignages de ma douleur et de ma crainte' (p.30); 'Où trouver un barbare qu'un repentir si vif et si tendre n'eût pas touché?' (p.52). This attitude of applauding the performance reveals itself again in the following sentence: 'J'ouvris les yeux pour verser un torrent de pleurs et la bouche pour proférer les plaintes les plus tristes et les plus touchantes' (p.36); the use of the word 'touchantes' here is clear evidence of his adoption of the attitude of spectator, to judge of the effects he manages to produce on his public—his complaints can be 'touching' only in so far as there is

someone present to be touched by them (in this case his father). Similarly, upon discovering that the Superior of Saint-Lazare knows all about him 'Je me mis à verser un ruisseau de larmes, avec toutes les marques d'un affreux désespoir' (p.90-91). Why 'avec toutes les marques'? The context shows that he wasn't deliberately trying to deceive the superior as to his feelings; the only explanation seems to be his instinctive play-acting, and the phrase 'avec toutes les marques' must necessarily lead us to question whether the 'affreux désespoir' was real or not, the presumption being towards the negative. This presumption is strengthened by the fact that the phrase just quoted is followed by a paragraph in which Des Grieux boasts of his exceptional sensitivity—and then of the useful effect it produces: 'Ma tristesse parut si excessive au supérieur, qu'en appréhendant les suites, il crut devoir me traiter avec beaucoup de douceur et d'indulgence' (p.92). There are further examples of a play-acting attitude: when he learns from G.M. that Manon is in the Hôpital général, he remarks with some satisfaction: 'Mon désespoir, mes cris et mes larmes passaient toute imagination. Je fis des choses si étonnantes, que tous les assistants, qui en ignoraient la cause, se regardaient les uns les autres avec autant de frayeur que de surprise' (p.96), and the words 'scène' and 'spectacle' come naturally to his mouth when describing the effect on his audience of the tender reunion with Manon: 'Nos soupirs, nos exclamations interrompues, mille noms d'amour répétés languissamment de part et d'autre, formèrent, pendant un quart d'heure, une scène qui attendrissait M. de T . . .' (p.119), and the 'valet qui la servait . . . avait l'âme moins basse et moins dure que ses pareils. Il avait été témoin de notre entrevue; ce tendre spectacle l'avait touché'. His whole attitude of wanting to make himself appear and sound interesting is reflected in the last sentence of Part One: 'Il nous assura que nous trouverions quelque chose encore de plus intéressant dans la suite de son histoire' (p.136).

Des Grieux paints of Manon a portrait compounded of caprice, wit, taste, sentiment, exquisite movement ('ce port divin'),

delicate rich colouring ('ce teint de la composition de l'amour'), charm ('ce fonds inépuisable de charmes'), and the expressive glance of 'ces yeux fins et languissants' which captivates every man who sees her. '. . . ses charmes surpassaient tout ce qu'on peut décrire. C'était un air si fin, si doux, si engageant! l'air de l'Amour même. Toute sa figure me parut un enchantement' (p. 47). In short, the lover's ornamentation conceals the real woman just as Prévost's masterly ornamentation conceals the ugly fact that his love story is the story of 'un fripon' and 'une catin'. This is the only aspect of the psychology which may be considered rococo with any justification.

Subject and themes

Montesquieu saw in *Manon* the story of 'un fripon' and 'une catin', and seen thus the subject is a sordid, naturalist one. On the other hand, this summary view neglects somewhat the beginning of the novel, which presents Des Grieux mainly as an ardent young lover before dealing with his moral breakdown: it would be more accurate to state the subject as the gradual social and moral degradation of a young man helplessly in love with a loose young girl, and her ultimate moral rehabilitation through this love. Such immorality and loose living are certainly not foreign to the rococo, but what is foreign to it is the constant reference to moral values, which is to be found in *Manon*.

The themes have a violence directly contrary to the rococo aesthetic—passion (not only that of Des Grieux and Manon for each other, but also that of Manon and Lescaut for pleasure) and catastrophe (destitution through high living, fire, robbery; imprisonment for fraud; deportation), life and death (murders of Saint-Lazare doorman and Lescaut, duel with Synnelet, death of Manon) love (not only that of Des Grieux and Manon for each other, but that of Des Grieux's father for his son), friendship (that of Tiberge, M. de T . . ., and the Superior of Saint-Lazare for Des Grieux), jealousy (of Des Grieux over Manon), obsession

(of Des Grieux for Manon), fortune (mentioned forty-five times in its various meanings), fidelity (of Tiberge with Des Grieux, of Des Grieux with Manon) and infidelity (of Manon and Lescaut with Des Grieux), hypocrisy (the deceptions we have already mentioned, but especially at Saint-Lazare where Des Grieux admits 'je jouai . . . un personnage d'hypocrite', p.93), sacrifice (Des Grieux's fine prospects, Manon's rich lovers, Tiberge's modest means are all sacrificed for others; above all, Des Grieux's gesture of following Manon into deportation constitutes a great sacrifice), socio-psychological barriers (Des Grieux's father cannot accept his marriage with Manon, Des Grieux cannot understand Manon's way of loving him, Manon and Lescaut cannot understand Des Grieux's jealousy). These themes may be constrasted with those of love and marriage which dominate the rococo theatre of Marivaux and his *Vie de Marianne*.

Meaning and philosophy

'On a vu dans cette *Histoire* le roman de l'amour rédempteur, de la femme fatale (autrement dite "éternel féminin"), de l'amour fou; un roman réaliste, crapuleux même; janséniste et un peu jésuite; un roman de reviviscence affective, d'intermittences du cœur; et enfin le roman, non plus de Manon, mais de Des Grieux'.

The meaning is to be found in the portrayal of the nature and effects of total love, as illustrated by love's victory over friendship, scruples, sincerity, and insight. The defeat of friendship is demonstrated by Des Grieux's appeals to Tiberge for help, financial (p.63-68) and otherwise (p.100-106), in spite of the knowledge that Tiberge (because 'le bien de sa maison (était) des plus médiocres' (p.16), and in spite of his 'bénéfice considérable' (p.45),) was by no means well-off: 'Son bénéfice valait mille écus, mais, comme c'était la première année qu'il le possédait, il n'avait encore rien touché du revenu' (p.68). And the help Des Grieux gets from Tiberge is sometimes obtained under false pretences

(p.100-106, 130-132). Moral scruples are overcome when Des Grieux commits himself to fraud (p.69) and even murder (p.111). Sincerity is abandoned in the many cases of deception and especially in Des Grieux's dissembling at Saint-Lazare (p.93). Finally, Des Grieux's vision is clouded, so that he does not see as rapidly or as clearly as one might expect either Manon's infidelity (pp.27-29, 34-36) or his own degradation (as we perceive from his attitude to swindling [p.59] and to his murder of the doorman [p.111]).

The talk of fate and providence, whether directed at Tiberge (pp.66, 106) or at the Homme de Qualité ('fatalité', p.80; 'la Fortune', p.84; 'la Providence', p.125; 'le Ciel', p.146), is part of Des Grieux's self-justification, and is quite misleading: the development of the lovers' lives is existential, determined by their own free choices. It has been said that at least the fire at Chaillot is independent of the causal force of their actions, but the catastrophe here is not the fire itself but the theft of the money-box, and even if the fire was not deliberately started (as it may have been) by the servant, the latter is the most likely to have exploited it. It was the servant, says Des Grieux, 'qui restait seule à Chaillot dans ces occasions, vint m'avertir, le matin, que le feu avait pris, pendant la nuit, dans ma maison et qu'on avait eu beaucoup de difficulté à l'éteindre' (pp.57-58). This servant is only mentioned as 'une fille qui la servait' (p.53), and either remained in Manon's employ after the G.M. episode or was hired in a great hurry immediately afterwards, neither of which alternatives suggests that she was any more trustworthy that the servants who rob them later (pp.73-74). It is reasonable to suppose that this incident may not have been an exception, after all, to the otherwise existential character of the life of Des Grieux.

The philosophy seems to be that of passionate love gradually converting to its generosity and commitment a soul previously lost to real love: Manon. She is converted from a weak, shallow, and selfish *amour-goût*, based on pleasure, to an *amour-passion* capable of selflessness and sacrifice. The crimes which occur in the

course of this conversion, especially the most heinous of them (for example, murder), receive scant attention: apparently the end (conversion of Manon by convincing her of the existence of an all-devouring, all-sacrificing love) justifies the means (murder of the doorman to escape from Saint-Lazare in order to free Manon from the Hôpital Général). For Manon, Des Grieux is prepared to sacrifice even the blood, even the life of others. Everything is acceptable when love is the mainspring.

Setting and atmosphere

The events take place under the *régence*. The social climate of this period is reflected in Lescaut's *ligue* of card-sharps, in the fact that the revelation of G.M.'s debauchery to the *lieutenant général de police* in no way diminishes his influence, in the frequency with which the rôle of kept woman is offered to Manon, and in Des Grieux's remark: 'une maîtresse ne passe point pour une infamie dans le siècle où nous sommes' (p.195). However, it is doubtful whether the basic conflict arises from an opposition between such false values of the period as the exclusion of true love, on the one hand, and the protagonists' 'véritable amour' on the other, as Laufer suggests. First of all, the protagonists do not share the same idea of love: a fundamental conflict exists between Des Grieux's concept of total love and Manon's more flexible attitude ('dans l'état où nous sommes réduits, c'est une sotte vertu que la fidélité', p.76; 'la fidélité que je souhaite de vous est celle du cœur', p.175), and he is forever pulling her back towards his own position—her attitude is not contrary to but virtually identical with that of the period, and if she abandons it to please him, it is with obvious reluctance. Secondly, the term '*véritable* amour' is not altogether appropriate even to Des Grieux's *amour-passion* (let alone Manon's type of love): if he really represented the values of true love *against* his period, he would be a *déclassé* of a different sort—he would be trying to find some work that would enable him to live happily with Manon; but this would be in conflict not

only with Manon (who must have luxuries, go to the theatre) but also with the class attitudes of the period with which he himself is infected (better to swindle than to trade), attitudes which exclude such a solution as would be appropriate to a 'véritable amour'. Finally, the pervasive immorality of the period is reflected in the extraordinary number of deceptions practised in the course of this story, and this fluctuation between reality and appearances finds expression in the 'play-acting' of Des Grieux, both of which we mentioned earlier: the depth of his feelings is very often open to question, and here again we see him infected with the values of his time.

The question of time-setting thus brings us directly to another aspect of the setting, that which involves the choice and treatment of the social classes presented. The class situation of Manon is ambiguous: as in the *Lettres persanes*, woman (kept woman or harem woman), while quite inferior and dependent, is in a position to sway men of wealth and consideration. Manon, whom Prévost changed from 'd'assez bonne naissance' to 'd'une naissance commune', is thus, in fact, *déclassée* in an upward direction, as Des Grieux becomes *déclassé* in a downward direction; and then both experience a further *déracinement social* on the psychological plane as they try to reach each other.

Both are strongly marked by class attitudes. Manon, says Des Grieux, 'voulut savoir qui j'étais, et cette connaissance augmenta son affection, parce qu'étant d'une naissance commune elle se trouva flattée d'avoir fait la conquête d'un amant tel que moi' (p.20). Des Grieux, on the other hand, belongs to the provincial nobility ('une des meilleures maisons de P . . .'; p.15), and his manner is evidence of his social rank (the *homme de qualité* declares that 'la bonne grâce et la vive reconnaissance avec laquelle ce jeune inconnu me remercia, achevèrent de me persuader qu'il était né quelque chose' [p.13], and on entering the prison of Saint-Lazare Des Grieux says to the superior 'Mon Père, point d'indignités. Je perdrai mille vies avant que d'en souffrir une' [p.90]). The story is full of servants (pp.17, 19, 20, 24, 27, 31, 32,

37, 53, 57, 73, 109, 111, 117, 120, 121, 123, 125, 134, etc.), soldiers (pp.55, 88, 89, 90, 134, etc.), tradesmen and hotel-keepers (pp.19, 32, 52, 112, 134, etc.), and Des Grieux looks down on them (pp.120, 123), though the indications of this attitude are relatively very few in number. The main passage in which he elaborates on his own superiority over 'le commun des hommes' is placed immediately after his first incarceration (pp.90-92), and stresses his sensitivity to shame and humiliation, a sensitivity he claims is not shared by the lower classes.

There is, among the dealings with the working class, an episode with a coachman (pp.123-124) that is worth comparing with the famous scene between madame Dutour and the coachman in *La Vie de Marianne*. In Prévost's passage, Lescaut plays madame Dutour's rôle of the more experienced person who refuses to let the protagonist pay the sum demanded, but the result is very different, the coachman getting by far the worst of it. In both works, the interferer takes a stick to the coachman, but only in *Manon Lescaut* is it the coachman who really runs the risk of suffering brutal treatment. Prévost's treatment draws its vivid effect not from detail and stylistic realism but from rapidity and brevity.

The place settings are Paris, Amiens, Chaillot, Louisiana. The Louisiana setting, which serves for the last twenty or so pages, is vague and unconvincing, and has been shown to be inaccurate. The presentation of Paris life, on the contrary, is full of realistic details—the constant preoccupation with financial considerations for example, has already been mentioned. The aspect mostly presented is the 'seamy' side of this life, providing a sordid, 'naturalist' background to the story—dives (the Hôtel de Transylvanie), prisons (Saint-Lazare, l'Hôpital général, le Petit Châtelet), deportations. Manon leaves G.M. on the pretext of 'un besoin' (p.87), Des Grieux is arrested 'en chemise' (p.182), and the arrangements for Manon's escape from prison are related with a wealth of realistic detail: 'J'avais avec moi, pour Manon, du linge, des bas, etc., et par-dessus mon juste-au-corps, un surtout qui ne

laissait rien voir de trop enflé dans mes poches. Nous ne fûmes qu'un moment dans sa chambre. M. de T . . . lui laissa une de ses deux vestes; je lui donnai mon juste-au-corps, le surtout me suffisant pour sortir. Il ne se trouva rien de manque à son ajustement, excepté la culotte que j'avais malheureusement oubliée. L'oubli de cette pièce nécessaire nous eût, sans doute, apprêté à rire si l'embarras où il nous mettait eût été moins sérieux. J'étais au désespoir qu'une bagatelle de cette nature fût capable de nous arrêter. Cependant, je pris mon parti, qui fut de sortir moi-même sans culotte. Je laissai la mienne à Manon. Mon surtout était long, et je me mis, à l'aide de quelques épingles, en état de passer décemment à la porte' (p.122).

The atmosphere is a strange mixture of *préciosité*, hyperbole, rhetoric, and naturalism, summed up in the following description of the burial of Manon: 'J'ouvris une large fosse. J'y plaçai l'idole de mon cœur' (p.239). The overall effect, in spite of the elements of sordid naturalism, is poetic, no doubt because of the musical rhythm and fluidity of much of the language and the constant tone of exalted, tormented, passionate love.

Conclusion

Apart from the subtle refraction of the story through several narrators (Des Grieux, *l'homme de qualité*, and the *abbé* Prévost) and the veneer of beauty (point of view, atmosphere) covering the cheap support (setting, events), which elements may perhaps be considered rococo, we find the work a mixture of baroque (themes, meaning, philosophy), romanticism (point of view, atmosphere), naturalism (setting), and classicism (structure, style). It is apparent that the classicism is to be found in the form, the baroque elements in the content.

If we remember that the 17th century masterpieces which *Manon* resembles in many ways, such as the plays of Racine, while they likewise combine baroque and classical elements, are still classed as classical, and if we may resolve the confusion between

the terms post-classical, pseudo-classical, and neo-classical by distinguishing between works preserving from classicism only the letter (pseudo-classicism: Voltaire's epic and theatre), only the spirit (neo-classicism: Voltaire's novels), or both the letter and the spirit (post-classicism), we may well class as post-classical such a work as *L'Histoire du chevalier Des Grieux et de Manon Lescaut.*

